

MAGIC

The Gathering[®]

Official Strategy Guide

The Color-Illustrated Guide to Winning Play



Features

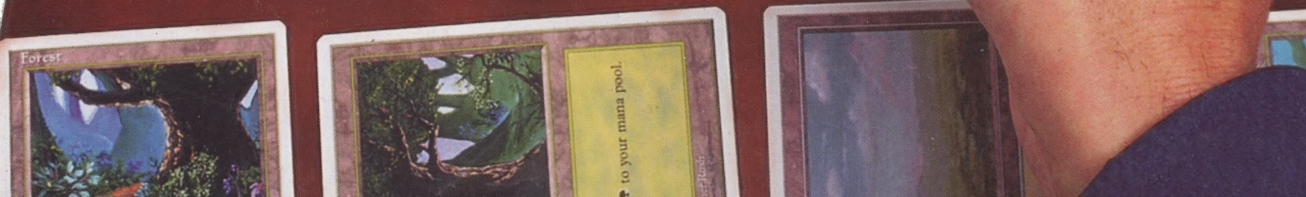
cards and strategies for
the *Fifth Edition* card set

BETH MOURSUND

COLUMNIST FOR

THE DUELIST

THRIFTBOOKS



MAGIC

The Gathering[®]

Official Strategy Guide

Published in the United States by
THUNDER'S MOUTH PRESS
632 Broadway, Seventh Floor, New York, NY 10012

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 1 56025 149 2

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 97-60226

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Printed in Spain

Project Editor: Roland Hall
Art Director: Russell Porter
Design: Steve West
Production: Garry Lewis

The publishers would like to thank Henry Stern, **Magic** game developer, for his
valuable assistance.

Distributed by
Publishers Group West
4065 Hollis Street
Emeryville, CA 94608

Official

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Introduction


When **Magic: The Gathering** was first introduced in August 1993, we were all beginners. We misunderstood some of the rules, but we managed. I won a small tournament the same weekend that I saw my first **Magic** cards. I was playing a red/green deck in what we would now call the “kitchen sink” style, built after splurging a whole \$30 or so on cards and trading a lot.


The game of **Magic** has come a long way since then. In some ways, it’s easier now for a beginner to get started. We have Quick Start sets, frequently-asked-question lists, and plenty of experienced players willing to teach newcomers the rules. Stores have plenty of cards for sale, and we have lists of all the cards and their rarities to help keep us from accidentally making a lopsided trade.

In other ways, though, things are harder for today’s beginners. Over the few years that **Magic** has been around, the top-level players have built up a combined total equal to tens or even hundreds of man-years of full-time devoted study of the game. This knowledge has been shared through personal contact, books, magazines, and the Internet, rapidly advancing the level of competition. The chances of a new player being able to learn the game in one weekend, build a deck from \$30 worth of cards, and win a tournament with it are slim to none. In fact, a lot of tournaments these days are so formal and structured, and the competition so tough, that most beginning players are too intimidated to even consider entering.

This book was written for the beginning player who’s trying to move past beginnerhood. It’s not for the complete novice; we won’t be explaining the phases of the turn, or how to cast a spell, or that damage to creatures doesn’t carry over from turn to turn. This book will help players who have learned the basic rules of the game but are baffled or overwhelmed by the strategy aspects.

As you move through the chapters, you’ll learn about building decks and general play strategy. After that, we’ll take five of the most common deck themes and analyze each one in detail, going over how to build a deck of that type and some specific strategies to keep in mind when playing it. Then we’ll discuss tips, tricks, and combinations to use with some popular and not-so-popular cards. We’ll finish up with an overview of some of the variations to the basic game which you’ll probably encounter, including **Magic** tournaments, league play, and rules for multiplayer, sealed deck, and drafting. At the end of the book, you’ll find a complete list of the *Fifth Edition* cards and a glossary of **Magic** jargon and slang.

SPECIAL NOTES: Since this book is designed for folks who have just recently come into the game, all of the examples use only cards from the most recent printing of the basic **Magic: The Gathering** set, called *Fifth Edition*. In a few places, we’ll make side comments about some older or out-of-print cards; these are marked with a Lotus icon, like this: 

Also, most of the book is oriented toward regular informal play. When we have a note that applies specifically to tournaments, it will be marked with the DCI logo, like this: 

The Duelists’ Convocation International, or DCI, is the tournament arm of Wizards of the Coast. The DCI maintains a set of tournament rules and standards, so players from any area can play in a DCI-sanctioned tournament and know that the rules will be the same.

In this chapter, we'll go over some rules of thumb for deck building. We'll begin by describing the specialties and weaknesses of each of the colors in **Magic**. Next, we'll cover some common misconceptions that beginning players often fall victim to when building decks. After that, we'll start from the viewpoint of a player who's purchased a starter deck or two and a few booster packs and discuss how to build the best deck from a limited card supply. Then we'll talk about how you can gradually improve that initial deck as you buy more cards or trade with your friends. Finally, we'll discuss some guidelines for designing decks from scratch when you aren't limited to just a few cards.

BASIC DECK BUILDING



Colors

Each of the five colors in **Magic** has some things it does very well and other things it does poorly or not at all. Keeping these specialties in mind will help a lot when you're building a deck.

Figure 1.1. Red specializes in damage and destruction. These are only a few of the spells a red mage can use to blow things up.



Red

Red specializes in direct or mass damage, random effects, and hordes of goblins and orcs. It also has a number of good flying creatures, especially large ones. Red has good artifact destruction, and more ways to blast creatures into oblivion than you can shake a stick at (figure 1.1). Red's Jokulhaups is the biggest "reset button" of all. Red's one glaring weakness is that it has no direct way to deal with enchantments.

Green

Green is the color of nature. Green's specialties are creatures, fast mana, and more creatures. It is not a subtle color. Green's creatures tend to be slightly less expensive than other colors' creatures of the same power. This, combined with its mana-producing or land-fetching effects (figure 1.2), allows green to get medium to large creatures into play frighteningly quickly. Green has a few removal spells, but is not well suited to a reactive style of deck.

*Figure 1.2. One of green's specialties is fast mana. Using cards like these, a green mage can sometimes have six mana by turn three; enough to cast a *Craw Wurm*!*



Blue

Blue is the color of meta-magic. It specializes in countering, controlling, or changing the opponent's spells and permanents (figure 1.3). Most "reactive decks"—see the later section on deck types—have blue as one of their colors. Blue has relatively few creatures, and most of them aren't terribly impressive, so it's not as often used in creature strategies. However, some decks featuring blue's medium-sized flying creatures, or small creatures with *Unstable Mutations*, do quite well.



Figure 1.3. Blue is the color of meta-magic. Blue mages have a variety of ways to mess with the opponent's spells and permanents—three of the most popular are shown here.



White

White specializes in defense, healing, and small, fast, dangerous creatures. It has spells to get rid of every type of permanent. Two of the best “reset button” spells, Armageddon and Wrath of God, are white, and so is Disenchant (figure 1.4). Many decks include a white component just for those spells. White also features the Blinking Spirit, one of the most annoying creatures in **Magic**. White has few large creatures, and no direct or continual damage.



Figure 1.4. White has the best defensive spells, but anyone who thinks white is only defensive has a lot to learn. Three of the best destructive spells in Magic, shown here, are white.



Black

Black represents death. It specializes in creature destruction, forced discards, small, fast, dangerous creatures, and creatures with unpleasant side effects or upkeep costs. Most of black’s creatures other than the Knights tend to be more expensive than other colors, but many of them have good special abilities to make up for this. Black also has Dark Ritual, allowing it to get an expensive creature into play quickly with a lucky draw. Necropotence gives black the most card-drawing capability of any color, and Drain Life combines direct damage with life gain (figure 1.5). Black has almost no ways to get rid of enchantments or artifacts.

Artifacts

Artifacts are not a color. Artifact spells can be cast using any color of mana, so they fit into any deck. Artifacts have no particular specialties, and not much can be said about them in general. Some artifacts duplicate effects that are available with cards of a specific color. These are always more expensive to use than the color cards they



Figure 1.5. Black is the color of death, which covers a lot of ground. Shown here are some of Black’s most powerful spells.

replace, but may be worth including in preference to trying to add another color to a deck (figure 1.6). Others create unique effects, different from any colored spells. Artifact creatures tend to be a little more expensive than regular creatures, but the advantage of being able to cast them using any type of mana balances this out.

Deck Construction Misconceptions

When looking at decks built by beginning players, and talking to them about why they chose the cards they did, we see some of the same mistakes occurring over and over. Ideas about which cards are best or about how to build a good deck spread from player to player, and are soon taken for granted. Often, a player teaching a new friend to play will pass these rules of thumb along. In this section, we'll take seven of these common myths of deck construction and talk about why they're not necessarily true, even if they seem logical.

MYTH: "The more cards, the better"

Beginning players often show up with decks so large that they can barely even be shuffled. Every new card they obtain goes straight into the deck. And take cards out? Unthinkable! Every one of those cards is precious, and essential to the deck. Never mind that a dozen games go by without even seeing half the cards.

Playing a super-large deck can be entertaining, but it can also be an exercise in frustration. Smaller decks are much more predictable and consistent. If you're deep into a duel and you need to draw one particular card to win, your odds of drawing it are much better if you have only thirty cards left in your library than if you have ninety. Similarly, if you've designed your deck around combinations of cards that work well together, you'll have a much better chance of getting both parts of the combination at the same time in a smaller deck. Furthermore, a smaller deck has a far lower chance of giving you a



Figure 1.6. Artifacts have no color, so they fit into any deck. Some, such as the ones shown here, duplicate effects available from colored spells—others are unique.

streak of ten lands in a row or ten non-lands in a row. Clumps like that usually spell doom unless your opponent's deck is also misbehaving.

The basic **Magic** rules require a minimum deck size of forty cards. There is no maximum deck size, since playing with an overly-large deck is its own punishment. In friendly play, many players raise this minimum and require at least sixty cards for freely-constructed decks. Whatever rules you're using, for best performance you should try to trim your deck down to not more than a few cards over the minimum.



Most "sealed deck" or "draft" tournaments (see Chapter 6) use the forty card minimum size. Tournaments of other types almost all use a sixty card minimum.



Figure 1.7. Big creatures like these are very intimidating, but small and medium-sized creatures will usually be the better bargain.

MYTH: "One land for every two spells"

One of the most common rules of thumb that new players are taught is to put one land into the deck for every two spells. Sometimes, this is extended to an even broader rule of one-third land, one-third creatures, and one-third other spells.

This rule of thumb is easy to remember, and decks following it will be reasonably playable. Serious players, though, quickly depart from these percentages. If you play with only one-third mana, you'll find that in quite a few games you'll have trouble drawing enough land to get your deck started before your opponent starts mauling you.

Most advanced players recommend having about forty percent land in a deck. This number can be a little lower if your deck has only one color of spells or consists almost entirely of one- and two-cost spells, or it can go higher if you're playing several colors or using a lot of spells with high casting costs. As to the number of creatures versus other spells, that depends entirely on the style of deck. Some successful decks have no non-creature spells, others have no creatures at all.

MYTH: "Big creatures rock!"

We've lost count of how many times we've seen beginning players ooh-ing and ah-ing over some creature like the Scaled Wurm or Leviathan (figure 1.7). "Sure, it costs a lot of mana to get out, but look how big it is! All I have to do is hit you with it three times and it's game over, man!"

No one can deny that the prospect of being slammed for 7 damage per turn is intimidating. However, if you draw a Scaled Wurm in your

opening hand, he's going to sit there taking up space for at least eight turns while you slowly build up enough mana to be able to cast him. During those eight turns, a 1- or 2-point creature could have attacked six or seven times, doing 7 to 12 points of damage if nothing stopped it. Hmm, maybe Mr Wurm isn't such a great bargain after all.

The other problem with big expensive creatures is that there are plenty of ways to destroy or neutralize a creature, and many of them only cost one or two mana. Just a few examples (see figure 1.8 for illustrations):

A two mana Counterspell will counter an expensive spell just as easily as it counters a cheap one.

The biggest creature in the world can be stopped cold by one small cheap regenerating blocker, such as a Drudge Skeleton, unless the big one has trample.

Terror will remove the threat entirely.

Gaseous Form will prevent it from dealing any damage.

Spirit Link makes it useless as an attacker, and allows the linker to trade cheap creatures for large amounts of life if you use the Linked creature to block them.

Big creatures do have their place in **Magic**. A few big creatures in a well-balanced deck, or in a deck designed to support them, can make good game-enders. Just don't get too carried away by the sight of the large power and toughness—remember the drawbacks. Be very cautious about putting too many high cost spells in any deck.



Figure 1.8. A few of the ways to destroy or neutralize a huge creature for only one or two mana.

Figure 1.9. These are three of the most generally useful cards in Magic—and they're all common.

MYTH: "Rare cards are the best!"

The rare card syndrome often goes hand in hand with the big creature syndrome. Beginning players stuff all their rarest or most expensive cards into a deck, and then can't understand why they keep losing.

In Magic, unlike many trading-card games, the most powerful cards are generally not the rarest. The designers of Magic try to make the most generally useful cards common or uncommon. Fireball, Dark Ritual, and Giant Growth, for example, are all common (figure 1.9). These are foundation cards—they'll be good in almost any deck of the appropriate color.



BASIC DECK BUILDING

Cards which are of use only in specialized decks or which are very complicated, on the other hand, will generally be rare (figure 1.10). For example, consider Stasis. It's a very powerful card—but if your deck isn't designed around it, you probably wouldn't want it.

Some rare cards are certainly better than some common cards, but the reverse is also true. In general, it's best to ignore rarities when designing a deck—or even to try to avoid using rares, since it's much easier to get hold of commons and uncommons in trading. You should look at what a card does and how it will help or hinder whatever you're designing your deck to do. Just because a card is rare or expensive doesn't mean that putting it in will make your deck better.



Figure 1.10. Cards which are very specialized or complicated are usually rare. Each of these three, for example, can form the centerpiece of a specialized deck—but they're fairly useless otherwise.



Figure 1.11. A handy combination: Breeding Pit produces a 0/1 creature every turn, which you can then turn into 2 damage to a target of your choice using the Skull Catapult.

Figure 1.12. Another combination: Karma is normally useless unless your opponent is playing with Swamps, but add a Magical Hack and you can tune it to match whatever land type your opponent has most of.

MYTH: "Combos Rule/Combos Suck"

"Combo" is Magic slang for combination, and refers to cards put into a deck to work together. Sometimes the cards are good by themselves but better in combination, such as Breeding Pit and

Skull Catapult (figure 1.11). Other times the cards are nearly useless alone but extremely powerful if you combine them. One common trick, for example, is to use a specialized card such as Karma with Magical Hack (figure 1.12).



Figure 1.13. A three-card combination, dubbed the “creature sweeper”. Attack with a Lured Basilisk and not only will the rest of your creatures go unblocked, but all your opponent’s creatures able to block will be destroyed. Add a Regeneration to the combination and you can keep the Basilisk alive to repeat the trick over and over.

Most players, once they get past the initial stage of figuring out what each card does and start trying combinations, quickly fall into one of two mindsets. Some decide that combinations are the ultimate in power. Symptoms of this are comments like “If I can get these three cards in play, and have these other two spells in my hand, and enough mana, it’s an automatic win!” Others decide that combinations are too fragile and unreliable and should never be depended upon. In extreme cases, they’ll refuse to use any card that can’t potentially win the game all by itself. A player may flip-flop from one of these opinions to the other after playing a combo-based deck repeatedly without having any of the combinations materialize, or after having their nice no-combo deck stomped by a Lured, Regenerating Basilisk (figure 1.13). Or they may just chalk it up to bad luck and remain steadfast in their beliefs. Arguments between players of these two opinions often become quite heated.

As in so many cases where people argue over diametrically opposed positions, the truth is somewhere in between. Combinations really are fragile and unreliable, especially if they involve more than two cards or if one of the cards in the combination is useless without the other. Nevertheless, some decks built around combinations can and do win consistently. The key is to design the deck in one of three ways:

Build a deck which is strong by itself, and then add a few cards which aren’t necessary for the deck to work, but which, if you happen to draw them, will give you a big advantage or an automatic win. The deck doesn’t depend on the combination; it’s just a nice bonus if it happens to work out.

Have so many interlocking combinations in the deck that, no matter what cards you draw, you’re almost guaranteed to have something that will work as a combination. A deck of this type is known as a “cluster deck”.

Find a core combination that pretty much guarantees a win, then build the rest of the deck entirely out of cards which help you get that combination into play, keep it in play, or survive until it’s in play. This is by far the most difficult of the three, and playing a deck of this type requires radically different strategies from playing a normal deck.

MYTH: “All I need is life”

Many beginning players, and even some fairly experienced ones, put great emphasis on gaining life. “After all,” they think, “if I can gain life faster than my opponent can damage me, I’ll have to win eventually.” This is also known as the “winning by not losing” approach. Players who fall into this trap fill their decks with spells that give them extra life (figure 1.14).



Figure 1.14. Life-gaining spells and effects can't win a duel for you—all they do in most cases is postpone losing.

While it's true that you can't lose if you gain more life than your opponent does damage—except to poison or library depletion—there are many more ways to deal damage than there are to gain life. If you devote all your resources to gaining life, you're merely postponing the inevitable—you may not lose for a long time, but you can't win, either.

Life-gaining effects can be very useful if they're in the deck for a specific reason. You might come up with a strategy that involves cards that damage everyone, or that cost life to activate, and need the extra life

Figure 1.15. Cards like these damage their user, but the benefit you get from using them is often worth it.



to keep from killing yourself. But if you don't have a particular reason for wanting life, you'll almost always be better off using something that brings you closer to a victory of your own, rather than just delaying your opponent's victory.

MYTH: “Damage myself? No way!”

This attitude is closely connected to the “all I need is life” belief. A number of cards deal damage to their controller or require paying life to use. Others require sacrificing your own creatures or artifacts. Still others create global effects, damaging both players or wiping out a whole category of cards, no matter who controls them. Beginning players look at these and shudder. “Who would ever want to play with that card? I’d be doing my opponent’s job for him!”

More experienced players recognize that if the benefit is large enough, it’s worth the cost. Some of the cards which damage their controller are extremely useful. For example, a number of lands such as City of Brass and Karplusan Forest give you multi-colored mana at the cost of a point of damage, and Ashes to Ashes gets rid of two of your opponent’s creatures while dealing five damage to you (figure 1.15). Good players weigh the benefits against the costs, and often decide that it’s worth the damage.



Another example of a card which damages its user: the out-of-print *Juzám Djinn* (figure 1.16), which was shunned by most players when it first appeared, is now recognized as one of the strongest cards in Magic and sells for upwards of \$100 on the collectors’ market.



Figure 1.16. The *Juzám Djinn*, one of the strongest cards in Magic.

Figure 1.17. Cards like these, which wipe out one or more whole categories of permanents, are called “reset buttons”.



Spells which wipe out one or more whole categories of permanents, such as Armageddon, Nevinyrral’s Disk, or Jokulhaups (figure 1.17), are commonly known as “reset buttons”. Used carelessly, they can hurt you more than they hurt your opponent. Used with care, though, they form an essential part of many strategies. Again, the key point to remember is that hurting yourself can be perfectly OK if it hurts your opponent more. We’ll have a lot more to say about reset buttons in the next chapter.

This brings us to the end of the common misconceptions. Now it’s time to start actually building decks.



If you're using cards from expansion sets, you may also have some multi-colored cards—cards with gold borders—if so, put them in small piles of their own, between the colors they contain, if possible, or off to the side somewhere if not.

Deck Building from Limited Cards

A lot of discussion on deck building starts with the assumption that you have access to as many cards as you want. Most players, though, start out by buying just a few cards. Even if you already have a lot of cards, you may join a league or play in a tournament where everyone starts with just a starter deck and a couple of boosters. In this section, we'll discuss how to take those few cards and build the best deck you can from them.

A few cards are one type but really fit more into the other category. If you notice a card like this as you're sorting, put it into whichever pile it seems to belong. For example, *Icatian Store* is a Sorcery, but when it's cast it produces four 1/1 creatures, so it can go in the creature pile. *Ball Lightning*, on the other hand, is a creature, but it can attack on the turn summoned and it's buried at the end of the turn, so it behaves more like a Sorcery than like a creature—it can go with the non-creature spells.

If you have all the cards in the world to choose from, you build up a deck by starting with nothing and adding cards to suit whatever goal you have in mind. In a limited-card environment, though, it's much easier to build a deck by starting with the whole collection of cards and then removing cards until you reach the size of deck you want to play.

Sorting the Cards

To begin, sort your cards into piles by color. Put all the red cards in one pile, blue cards in another pile, and so on. Put the artifacts in their own pile. Sort the lands by the color(s) of mana they produce, putting them into piles right above the spells of that color. If you have any lands which produce more than one color of mana, put them in small piles of their own in between the colors they match. You might have to move piles to get the right colors next to each other—if you arrange your piles in the same color order as the colored dots on the backs of the cards, then all



Figure 1.19. Some cards, like these, are only useful in combination with other specific cards. If you don't have the full combination, set them aside.

the two-color lands from *Fifth Edition* will fit right between two adjacent piles. Lands that don't produce mana can go in the artifact pile, or in a separate pile, whichever you prefer. Spread the piles out a bit so you can see all of the spells. You should end up with something like figure 1.18.

In a limited card environment, creatures are extremely important. They will form the bulk of both your offense and your defense. So the next step is to take each of those piles of spells and split them into creatures and non-creatures. Also, if you have any spells which you're certain you won't want to use in your deck—for example, an *Animate Wall* when you have no walls, or one lonely *Plague Rats* (figure 1.19)—you can set them aside so you won't even count them as you continue.

Strong and Weak Spells

Some spells are extra strong in a limited environment and will often tilt the game in your favor if you draw them during a duel. Almost every deck of this kind will be creature-based, so anything that can kill, control, or disable an opponent's creature can create a big swing. So can spells which deal damage directly to a player or to a target. Creatures with evasion abilities are often game winners, too—so are other cards that allow you to give one of your creatures evasion abilities.

On the other hand, some spells are underpowered. Some are just less efficient at whatever



Figure 1.20. After sorting by color, separating the creatures and non-creatures, and putting the stronger cards on top, your piles will look something like this.

they do than others with similar casting costs. Very specialized spells also count as weak, since you're unlikely to have enough cards of any given type to be able to focus on one specialization. If you can't figure out why you'd ever want to play a particular card, it probably falls into the "specialized" category.

It may be helpful at this point to split the spells in each of your piles into two classes:

"Keepers". Cards you're happy playing with. These range from game-winners down to just OK.

"Better than nothing". Not something you'd prefer to draw, but you'd rather put it in than add one more land card.

Put the better cards on top of their piles where they'll stand out as you're looking over your cards, and the not-so-good cards at the bottom. Any cards which are so useless that you'd rather just have another land should already have been removed. If you notice one that you missed, set them aside now.

As you play more **Magic** and see various cards in action, you'll get better at judging whether a card is strong, weak, or in-between.

HOW MANY COLORS IN A DECK?

If a deck has only one color of spells and the matching type of land, then no matter what you draw, you'll always have the right color of mana to cast any spell in your hand. However, you'll be very vulnerable to color-specific spells, such as Circles of Protection.

If your deck contains an even mixture of two colors, you'll usually get some of each. Two-color decks generally work quite well. Sometimes, though, you'll find yourself with a handful of spells of one color and a bunch of land producing the other color. This is very annoying, and may be fatal, since you won't be able to cast anything until you draw a land or spell of the opposite color.

If you're playing with three colors, you have an even higher chance of not getting the mana you need to cast spells of one of those colors—especially if you have spells which require two or more mana of the same color.

Playing with four or five colors practically guarantees mana problems.

For now, don't fret too much about it; just give it your best guess. Remember the "bigger is better" fallacy, though! Don't be fooled into thinking that just because a creature is huge or a spell is powerful, it's a game-winner. Look carefully at what you're getting for the cost, and think about when you'd be able to cast each spell, and how much good it would probably do for you at that time.

After all this sorting, you should have something like Figure 1.20.

Building the Deck

Now it's time to get down to the nitty-gritty of eliminating cards. Take the minimum deck size for the rules you'll be playing under—probably either forty or sixty. Allowing forty percent for land tells you how many spells you'll need.

For a forty card deck, forty per cent is sixteen, leaving room for twenty-four spells.

For a sixty card deck, forty per cent is twenty-four, leaving room for thirty-six spells.

This is your "target number."

At this point, you could just go through and discard all your weakest cards to bring the deck down to target size. This would almost certainly leave you with cards in all five colors. Add an appropriate number of lands for each color and you're ready to play. If you try this, though, you'll quickly see the problems. Shuffle the deck and deal yourself an opening hand. Unless you included a lot of artifacts, you'll be lucky if it contains even one spell which could be cast using mana from the lands you drew.

Five-color decks generally don't stand a chance against decks with fewer colors, because it takes so long to draw enough types of land to cast your spells. When two five-color decks play each other, it's often the pure luck of who manages to draw a mid-sized creature and matching mana first that determines the winner.

You can certainly do better than that. If you actually tried the five-color deck, sort the cards back out for another try. You need to eliminate some colors to make the deck more playable.

Remove Minor Colors

Look over your spread-out cards and find the two colors that have the smallest number of creatures and “keeper” cards. Set all of those aside and take a look at what’s left.

Unless you started with quite a large number of cards, you won’t have enough spells of any one color to make a single-color deck. Depending on just how many cards you started with, and what rules for minimum deck size you’re playing with, you may be able to manage a two-color deck, or you may be forced to go with three.

Artifact spells, and especially artifact creatures, are great to have since they don’t require any colored mana. You can use mana from any of your lands to cast them. If you have some good artifacts, a two-color deck becomes much more feasible.

Even if you have enough cards in some of your colors to make a two-color deck, you’ll often find that this would mean including quite a few of the “better than nothing” cards. If so, you’ll be better off adding a third color and replacing the marginal cards with strong cards of that third color. This does increase your risk of mana problems, but the stronger cards can more than make up for it.

If you have enough cards and decide to go with just two colors, then set the third color aside. Otherwise, leave it in.

Trimming

Now start whittling away at the remaining cards. Anything from the “better than nothing” side of your piles is a strong candidate for removal. As mentioned earlier, creatures need to form both your main offense and your main defense, so think extra hard before removing a creature. Any card which is only useful if some other specific card is in play, either on your side or on your opponent’s side, should probably go. So should those which rely on your opponent playing a particular color. Spells which work on your opponent’s land are fine, since every opponent will have land. The same goes for spells which work on your opponent’s creatures. While it’s possible in an open environment to build some very effective creatureless or near-creatureless decks, in a limited-card environment you can safely rely on everyone having a reasonable number

of creatures. Enchantments and artifacts are less common; don’t bet on your opponent playing either of them.

Don’t just look at what each card does in isolation. Pay attention to the overall balance of your deck as well:

Make sure you have plenty of creatures.

Try to keep a good mixture of small and large creatures, so that you’ll have some you can cast immediately as well as some big bruisers for late in the game when you have plenty of mana.

You’ll usually want a mixture of offensive and defensive spells, but when in doubt, go with the offense.

If you’re playing a three-color deck, beware of keeping too many spells which require more than one colored mana, and also watch out for effects which require paying colored mana to use.



Figure 1.21. Utility spells like these may be worth splashing, depending on what else is in your deck.

Keep removing spells until you reach your original target number. Be ruthless! In fact, if you've decided to play three colors, you may even want to lower your target number by one to two cards for a forty card deck or two to three cards for a sixty card deck, to allow for a higher mana ratio.

If you get down to within a card or two of your target number and really can't find anything else to remove, it's OK to leave it that way. Just be sure you don't use this as a reason to lower your land percentage. You'll need *more* land, not less, if you have more cards than you were originally planning for.

Splashing a Color

Earlier in this chapter, we told you how reducing the number of colors in your deck will make it work better. Now we're going to turn around and talk about adding an extra color back in.

Each color in **Magic** has certain specialities and certain weaknesses. Experienced players have found that it's often worth adding just a few lands and a couple of spells of a different color to a deck, if those spells fill a hole in the deck's defenses or give it significant extra strength. This is called a "splash" or a "mini." The off-color lands can still be used for generic mana if you don't happen to draw the splashed spells, and they're few enough that they won't interfere much with your chances of having the necessary colored mana for your main colors. If you draw the splashed spells without the splashed land, they'll sit in your hand taking up space, but with only a couple in the deck, that won't cause you too much trouble either.

To be considered for splashing, a spell must require only one colored mana. It should be capable of giving you a significant advantage, and it should be useful under almost any circumstances. A splashed spell shouldn't duplicate abilities that your deck already has from spells in its regular colors. Figure 1.21 shows some of the types of spells players often splash.

Adding the Land

Once you've weeded your spells down to your target number—or at least close to it—it's time to




Figure 1.22. If your deck contains cards like these, which need plenty of one color of mana for best effect, you'll want to include more land of that type.

add the land. You already calculated how many lands you'd need when you started; now you just need to decide how to parcel them out between the colors.

If you lowered your target numbers for spells, remember to add that number to your land. And if you ended up going over your target number, add another land for each two or three extra spells.

Your land distribution should roughly match the color distribution of your spells. If your spells are divided equally between colors, your land should be divided fairly equally too. If, on the other hand, you have more of one color than another, you should have more of that type of land.

 Most sealed deck tournaments allow adding four or five extra basic lands of your choice to the ones in your starter deck.

You can fine-tune this a bit by looking at the actual costs on your spells. If none of your spells of

one color require more than one colored mana, then you can tilt the balance a little more toward the colors that do require more. Also, check the text of the spells. If any of your cards have abilities or upkeep costs which require colored mana, you may want to go a little heavier on that type of land. This is especially true if you're using cards which can be "pumped"—activated multiple times in the same turn—with one color of mana, such as Killer Bees or Pestilence (figure 1.22).

Don't reduce the land for any one color of mana to less than ten percent of your deck—four cards in a forty card deck, six in a sixty card deck—unless it's a splashed color.

If you have only the lands from your starter deck to work with, you may put in all the lands matching the colors you've chosen and still come up short. You can usually fix this easily by just bumming a few extra lands off a friend, unless, of course, the deck is for a tournament or league which restricts you to just your starter lands.

If you can't come up with enough land to support the spells you've chosen, then you have a choice—either play with not enough mana, or add lands of another type. If you choose to add lands of another type, then you might as well go back to the spell-picking stage and add a splash or even another full-fledged color of spells. Since you're going to have the mana-color problems anyway, you might as well get the benefits.

Adding a color is almost always a better choice than running short on mana.

Test, Test, Test

Now that you've picked out all the cards you think you want to use, it's time to start seeing how they work together. Shuffle your deck thoroughly, so you don't have all your land clumped in one spot. Then deal yourself a few opening hands. Ask yourself whether you'd be happy starting a duel with those cards. Do you have enough land? Too much land? Does the color mix seem good? Do you have some spells you can cast right away? Will you be in trouble if your opponent puts out a one- or two-point creature and starts attacking right away?

Try playing a couple of quick games against an imaginary opponent who has mana problems and can't cast any spells. How many turns does it take you to finish off such a helpless victim? If it usually takes more than seven or eight turns, you may have too many defensive or specialized cards, or possibly too many high-cost spells.

If these simple tests showed you problems with your deck, you may be able to improve it by adding or removing a few cards. Don't forget to look through the cards you're not using. You may want to swap a high-cost spell or two for less powerful but easier to cast spells which you left out originally, or vice versa.

Now you're ready to play. Sure, your deck isn't perfect. No deck in a limited environment is ever as strong as decks built with a completely free choice of cards. For playing against other

decks built under the same rules, though, it should be fine.

Leaving The Limited Environment

As you play games using your limited environment deck, you'll undoubtedly find yourself wishing something like: "If only I had a few more green creatures", or "I really need something to stop fliers", or "My Fireball is always on the bottom of the deck, I sure wish I had more than one". If the deck was built for a sealed-deck tournament, then your wishes will have to stay wishes. But if you're playing in a league that allows trading, or if you just used the cards you happened to own, you can easily make those wishes come true.

You could add to your card supply by just buying more cards. If you're looking for one particular card that way, though, you can end up spending an awful lot of money. Many stores sell single cards, and you can pick up specific commons fairly inexpensively, but you may have to pay through the nose if you're looking for a rare card. Unless you have a lot more money than time, the best way to get the cards you want for your deck is to buy some packs and then start trading.

Trading

Magic is called a "trading card game" because it was designed from the beginning with the idea that players would trade cards with each other to get ones they wanted to use. Trading can be a lot of fun. Some players even find that they enjoy trading and collecting more than the duels!

The trading value of a card is based on two factors—how many of them are around, and how many people want them. In a limited trading pool, as some leagues use, the total number of available cards is small and cards are valued almost entirely by how useful they are in a deck.

A common but very powerful card like Incinerate might easily be traded for several rare, but less-useful, cards in this sort of environment. In open trading, though, rarity becomes much more important. Common cards, no matter how useful they are, won't trade for much. Most of the experienced players and collectors have so many common cards that they simply aren't interested in acquiring any more no matter what the offer is.

Rare cards, though, can usually be traded, and rare cards that are in high demand for use in decks fetch a large premium.

Some unscrupulous traders will try to take advantage of new players. Others are happy to help out beginners, and may throw in extra cards. To avoid becoming a victim, get advice from friends or other experienced players before making a trade, or pick up a copy of one of the magazines which publish **Magic** price guides. Don't pay a whole lot of attention to the listed prices—just use them to check the rarities of the cards and to get a general idea of whether Card A is valued twice as much as Card B.

One of the best ways to trade when you're starting out is to find an experienced player who has more common cards and land than he can possibly use. Such a player will often be glad to give you twenty or so commons and lands which you can put to good use in your decks in exchange for a rare which you may not even want to play with. Both players win in a deal of that sort.

Another good trade is to find a friend who's just starting out and has chosen different colors to play than you. By swapping all the cards in a color you're not using for all of your friend's cards in a color he's not using but you are, both of you end up ahead.

If you know a lot of **Magic** players, you can gradually improve your collection by finding out what cards each person wants and what they're willing to give for them, and then watching for chances to pick those cards up for less when trading with someone else. This works especially well if you trade with separate groups of players—in two different stores, for example, or at a store and at school. You'll find that some cards are in high demand everywhere, but others are much more popular among some groups than others. If you trade away cards that are "hot" among the group you're currently with and pick up cards that are undervalued, then trade those off again in the next group, you can gradually increase the size and value of your collection—and have a lot of fun in the process.

Once you get a good-sized collection of cards, you'll be able to build just about any type of deck you want. In the next section, we'll discuss how to go about designing a deck when you have the whole world of cards to choose from.

Constructed Decks

When you're building a deck from a small supply of cards, you have relatively few options. The cards that you have will more or less force you into one style of play, and your deck won't have much, if any, of a theme or plan behind it.

Things are very different when you move into the world of constructed decks. When designing a constructed deck, you can draw from all the cards in print. You don't think much about which cards you happen to own—instead, you plan to buy or trade for anything you need once you've finished designing the deck.



Actually, you can draw from all the cards ever printed, if the rules you'll be playing under allow it and your wealth or trading skills give you access to the rare out-of-print "spoiler" cards. In this book, though, we have focused on decks that can be built using current cards, and strategies that apply to those cards.

Foundations of Constructed Decks

The first question to ask yourself when you start designing a deck is: what is the goal of this deck? The answer will generally be some combination of:

Win duels.

Be fun to play.

Amuse yourself and/or your friends.

Since this is a strategy guide rather than a fun/amusement guide, our advice will be oriented toward the "win duels" goal. Assuming that your primary goal for the deck is to win duels, the next question is—how?

"Fun" Decks

Magic is a game, and is meant to be fun. Unless you're playing in a high-stakes tournament or a big ante match, it doesn't really matter who wins. Many casual players dislike the sort of well-tuned, highly-focused decks which win tournaments. Instead, they'll build decks around the theme of a favorite book or movie, a bad pun, or an elaborate and unlikely combination. Sometimes they'll go out of their way to design decks using unpopular or inefficient cards, just to show that it can be done. They'll still try to win when playing with these decks, but it's no big deal if they don't. The point is to have fun playing the game.

Ways to Win

The rules of **Magic** define a number of different ways to win. Well, actually, they don't define ways to win—they define ways to lose. Since **Magic** is normally a two-player game, you win as soon as your opponent reaches one of the losing conditions. The primary ways to lose, from most to least common, are:

- Having zero (or less) life.
- Drawing from an empty library.
- Acquiring ten poison counters.
- Conceding.


 A few cards provide other ways to lose. None of these are in the basic set, and many are out of print. Figure 1.23 shows some examples. Since those are things you have to do to yourself rather than things someone else can do to you, though, they're not much help when thinking of ways to win.



Figure 1.23. A few cards, such as these, provide other ways to lose.

Conceding can pretty much be ignored, although there are a few out-of-print spells—usable only when playing for ante—which force your opponent to choose between permanently losing a card or immediately conceding.

Winning via poison counters or by running your opponent out of cards is a very specialized tactic. The most common way to win, by far, is with damage. It's so common, in fact, that it's worth breaking down further. The main ways to deal damage are:

- Attacking with creatures.
- Spells and effects which deal damage directly.
- Cards which deal damage every turn or every time some event occurs.

These categories could be broken down even further, but this is enough for now.

You should pick one of these methods of winning to focus your deck on. Many deck builders will also pick a second method, and occasionally even a third, as a backup in case the deck's primary method is foiled.

Winning Means Not Losing, Too

One of the oldest jokes in **Magic** features a kid telling his friend about the deck he's just built. "This deck is awesome! It's guaranteed to win on turn twenty, every game. The only problem is, I usually lose before we get to twenty turns." OK, it may be a dumb joke, but it points out the other requirement for a winning deck—you need to avoid losing, yourself. You can approach this problem in several different ways. The approach you choose defines the style of the deck. The approaches can be loosely grouped into three categories:

- Active—take the initiative, attack your opponent.
- Reactive—wait for opponent to do something, then deal with it.
- Proactive—or "Resource Deprivation"—prevent opponent from being able to do anything.



Figure 1.24.
A typical active deck in action.

Active Decks: "Damn the Torpedoes, Full Speed Ahead!"

Active decks follow the philosophy that the best defense is a good offense. In extreme cases, they have no defense-oriented cards at all. By simply hitting the opponent as hard and as fast

as possible, players of these decks either win before the opponent can do whatever his deck is designed to do, or force him to spend all his resources defending himself, with nothing to spare to hurt the aggressive deck's player (figure 1.24).

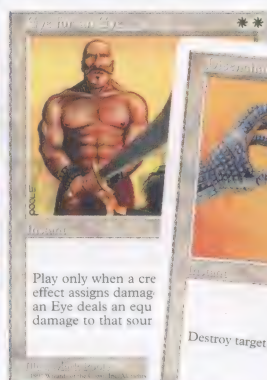




Figure 1.25.
A typical reactive deck in action.
The player on the left is firmly
in control of the situation.



Reactive decks: "Just say no."

Reactive decks take the opposite approach. In extreme cases, they'll do nothing except play land, and perhaps put some defensive cards into play, until the opponent takes an action. Then they may counter the spell if it seems threatening. If the spell creates a permanent, they may instead do something to remove or nullify it, or even take control of it, once it's in play (figure 1.25). If it's not an immediate threat, or if they have a card in play which keeps it from being a threat—a Circle of Protection for example, or a Wall large enough to block that particular creature without being destroyed—they may just ignore it.

Almost all reactive decks have some small active component, since a deck that's purely reactive won't ever win unless the opponent runs out of cards—or gets so fed up that he concedes. Those that are designed to win by running the opponent out of cards usually include one or more cards to speed up that process. Others include just a few cards that can deal damage.





Figure 1.26. A typical land destruction/discard deck in action. The player on the left is stripping away resources from the player on the right, leaving him unable to defend himself



Proactive decks: “You didn’t really want to play this game, did you?”

Proactive decks, also known as “resource denial” decks in less extreme or “lock” decks in more extreme cases, are the strangest of the three types. Instead of directly setting out to defeat the opponent, or sitting back and waiting for him to do something, the proactive deck tries to make it impossible for the opponent to play. It does this by destroying or disabling as many of the opponent’s mana sources as possible, or in some cases by stripping the cards out of the opponent’s hand (figure 1.26).





Figure 1.27. A lock: at the end of each of your opponent's turns, you use the Time Elemental to bring the Stasis back to your hand, then recast it on your own turn. Your opponent can never cast another spell. Getting a deck of this sort to work is very difficult.

Most decks that take the proactive approach use it as an aid to a regular active or reactive strategy. These decks don't completely stop the opponent from playing—they merely slow him down or handicap him so much that they can dominate the game. The "lock" deck, on the other hand, works to set up some combination

of cards which gives it complete control of the game (figure 1.27). If you manage to achieve such a lock, you can then continue to a leisurely win using a single damage-dealing card, or simply maintain the lock until the opponent runs out of cards—recycling your own library if necessary.

Colors

Once you've decided on the general style of the deck, it's time to start figuring out what goes in it. You can either pick your color or colors first, and then select spells from those colors, or you can pick a spell or two that you want to base the deck around and let that choice determine your colors.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, each color has its own strengths and weaknesses. You need to consider these when choosing your colors, since you'll only be able to use tactics available in those colors. If you want to counter your opponent's spells, for example, you need blue. If you want fast mana, you need green or black, and so on.

In the section on limited-card environments, we discussed the trade-offs between the advantages of using several colors, and the disadvantages of the mana problems this can cause. This applies just as strongly to constructed decks. When planning a constructed deck, you can design your deck using lands or other cards which produce more than one color of mana (figure 1.29). These make colored-mana problems less likely. However, many of the decks you'll be facing when playing constructed decks have fast, aggressive, "do unto others before they do unto you" themes, and a fair number include land destruction as part of their strategy, so any mana problems that you do have are much more likely to be fatal. Because of this, the vast majority of tournament decks use three colors or less.



Figure 1.29. Cards like these help avoid mana problems in multi-colored decks.



If you're using out-of-print "spoiler" cards, one other type of lock is possible. Instead of depriving your opponent of mana or of cards, you can deprive him of turns. To do this, you set up a loop of some sort allowing you to recycle a Time Walk indefinitely (figure 1.28). If you manage to get this lock working, your opponent never gets another turn. The same thing can be done with a Final Fortune/Time Vault combination, since the "lose at end of turn" clause on Final Fortune doesn't get a chance to happen if you use that turn to charge a Time Vault.



Figure 1.28. The ultimate lock. Using out-of-print "spoiler" cards, you can set up a combination such that your opponent never gets another turn. One way to do this is to empty your library, then continually recycle a Time Walk by using a Soldevi Digger to put it back on your library where you immediately draw it again.

Building the Deck

Once you've decided on the general approach you want your deck to take, and the colors you want to use, it's time to get down to the nitty-gritty and start choosing cards.

When first starting out, you by necessity built "kitchen sink" decks—you put in any card that looked like it might be useful or interesting. To advance past that stage, you need to get much more selective about the cards you use. Every



Most Magic tournaments these days use the Duelists' Convocation International (DCI) rules for deck construction, or a close variant of them, even if the tournament isn't sanctioned by the DCI. These rules require that a constructed deck contains at least sixty cards and has no more than four of any one card other than basic lands. The full DCI rules also limit just which cards can be used, depending on the type of the tournament. Those restrictions change several times a year, though, so we won't get that specific.



Figure 1.30. Build your deck with cards that complement each other instead of fighting. For example, you wouldn't want Clay Statues in a deck with Meekstones, but Dragon Engines would work very well.

card in your deck should have a specific reason for being there, and should contribute to the overall goal and style of the deck. Keeping to this rule is the most difficult part of deck design for many new players.

Another very important rule is that your cards should complement one another, not fight with each other. It's fairly easy to see that you wouldn't put creatures with power greater than 2 in a deck with Meekstones, and almost as easy to see that enchantments which raise your creatures' power above 2 aren't such a hot idea in that deck either. Creatures with a base power of 2 or less that can then be temporarily pumped higher, on the other hand, work very well in company with Meekstones (figure 1.30). Other combinations are more subtle. For example, putting flying creatures in a deck with Hurricanes (figure 1.31) may seem self-defeating. However, using large fliers for damage, along with Hurricanes to clear any smaller flying blockers out of the way, could work quite well.

Deciding how many of each card to put in is also tricky. If you want the highest possible chance

of drawing a particular card, you need to put four of them in the deck. Cards which are only really useful in the early parts of the game—or at least, are less useful later—and which you don't mind having multiples of, should nearly always come in four-somes. This is especially true for decks which use mana-producing Elves, Birds, or Dark Rituals to try to get something large out quickly.



Figure 1.31. If you put Hurricane in a deck full of flying creatures, you'll be damaging your own creatures.

Cards which are useful any time in the game, such as most of the red direct-damage spells, are also good in groups of four.

Some decks' strategy is built around one special card, such as *Titania's Song*, *Winter Orb*, or *Necropotence* (figure 1.32). Once you have one of these cards in play, a second is redundant and useless except as a backup. Even so, you should include four of that card, since the deck can't use its main strategy until you get one. These decks should be designed to be able to function even without their central card, though, since you can't guarantee that you'll draw it or that your opponent won't manage to get rid of it somehow.



Figure 1.32. Some decks are designed around one special-purpose card, such as these.

If having more than one of a card in play is redundant, and that card isn't a critical core of your deck's strategy, then you're usually best off putting only one or two of it in your deck. You

won't have as good a chance of drawing it in a game, but the trade-off is worth it, since you don't want to be stuck drawing a useless card when you're in a critical situation.

Some spells are only useful late in the game, or take a lot of mana to cast. For these, you want to lessen the chance of drawing one in your opening hand since it will just sit there taking up space which could have been used for something you could actually play. You're better off using only one or two of these, or perhaps three if the card is especially important.

Obviously, no matter what type of deck you've decided to build, you'll need lands for mana to power it. The guidelines which we discussed in the limited environment section apply equally to constructed decks. In general, you should plan for around forty percent mana. You can get away with less in a one-color deck or a deck where all the spells are very cheap to cast, but you may need even more if you're playing several colors or using a lot of expensive spells.

Practice Makes Perfect

Talking about how to build a deck is all well and fine, but when you get right down to it, the only way to really learn how to do it is to build some decks and try them out. The more practice you have, the more you'll develop an intuitive feel for how the cards combine, which ones work well together, and how many of each you'll need.

Tuning a deck is an important part of building it. Even the very best players don't just put a deck together and take it off to a tournament. Instead, they test the deck over and over again against as many different styles of deck as they can. They keep track of what problems the deck has, and try to think of what they can change to make it work better. Sometimes tuning may involve taking a card out completely, or substituting one card for another. Often, though, the changes are very subtle—putting in one or two more lands, using two of one card instead of three and three instead of two of another, and the like.

This brings us to the end of general deck-building. Chapter 5 will go into more detail on some specific types of decks, including sample decks. First, though, it's time to talk about strategies for actually playing the game.

As the previous chapter's section on deck styles mentioned, the vast majority of decks in Magic are designed to win by damage. The most common way of dealing damage is to attack your opponent with creatures. It makes sense, then, that quite a lot of the strategy in many duels revolves around creature combat. That's why we'll begin our section on strategies in play with combat. This chapter will cover a number of combat-related topics, including:

CREATURES AND COMBAT STRATEGY



Figure 2.1. For the same casting cost you can deal three damage immediately, or two damage every turn starting next turn.



The strengths and weaknesses of creature-based strategies.

Overview of the rules for combat.

Deciding when and how to attack or block.

Taking advantage of combat abilities.

Creature stand-offs and stand-off breakers.

Using fast effects during combat will be covered in the next chapter.

Advantages of Creatures

Creatures have some big advantages over other methods of dealing damage. Most of them stem from the fact that creatures are re-usable. The most efficient direct-damage spell in *Fifth Edition* is *Incinerate*, which does 3 damage for 1 red mana. For that same 1 red mana you could summon a 2/2 *Ironclaw Orcs* (figure 2.1). The Orcs can't attack immediately, but starting the next turn, they can do 2 damage every turn until your opponent blocks or gets

rid of them. By the third turn they've dealt more damage than the *Incinerate* did, and they can keep doing more and more. Or consider the *Orgg* (figure 2.2). For the same amount of mana that it would take to do

4 damage with a Fireball or Disintegrate you get a creature which can do 6 damage every turn, provided your opponent has nothing to stop it.

Some non-creature spells create permanents with re-usable damage effects, but none are as cost-efficient as an unblocked creature.

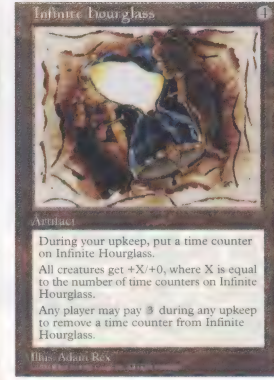


Figure 2.2. The Orgg is the most cost-effective of all, if your opponent has nothing to stop him from attacking.



Figure 2.3. Just a few of the many ways to make your creatures even stronger.

Most can do only 1 damage per turn. Those that can do more either damage you as well as your opponent or require payments every turn. Creatures can be used to defend as well as to attack, if you're facing another creature-based deck, and they're quite efficient for that purpose as well.



Another advantage of creatures is the huge number of other spells and effects which make them stronger. These include one-shot effects like Giant Growth or Blood Lust, lasting effects like Holy/Unholy Strength, and mass effects like Orcish Oriflamme or Infinite Hourglass (figure 2.3). Incinerate always does three damage—there's nothing else you can cast to make it do more. Your creatures, though, can easily be enhanced.

Figure 2.4. Just a few of the many ways to deal with your opponent's creatures.



Disadvantages of Creatures

Despite their advantages, creatures have a number of disadvantages as a way of dealing damage. One big problem with creatures is that other creatures can easily stop them. A cheap 1/1 creature can throw itself in the way of your biggest attacker, saving your opponent from taking any damage (unless the attacker has Trample, which we'll discuss later in the chapter). If the 1/1 creature has a Regeneration ability, then it can keep doing this turn after turn.

Even if your opponent isn't using creatures, there are still more ways to stop creatures from dealing damage than there are to stop other things. A direct-damage spell or effect can usually only be stopped by countering it or preventing the damage. Creatures are easier to neutralize. You can reduce their power to 0, or use a "creature deals no damage in combat" effect. You can tap them, or prevent them from attacking. You can destroy or remove them from the game. You can even take control of them and use them against their owner (figure 2.4)!

Another problem with creatures involves mass-damage or mass-destruction spells.

A number of spells and effects damage or destroy every creature in play (figure 2.5). If you're playing with creatures yourself, then

these spells are of limited usefulness—you would only cast them when you were in a losing position, since otherwise you'd be wiping out your own advantage. If you're not playing with creatures, though, these very powerful spells have no drawbacks and you can take full advantage of

them. A creatureless player using these spells can often destroy many creatures in one blow. This sort of exchange, where you spend one card of your own to get rid of several of your opponent's cards, can be key to winning duels.



Figure 2.5. Mass-damage and mass-destruction spells like these are extra effective if you have no creatures of your own.

Combat Overview

Before getting into combat strategy, let's quickly review the rules for the attack.

The attack is a special part of the main phase. You can't start an attack until your opponent has had the chance to use as many fast effects as he wants to in the main phase. When you're ready to attack, tell your opponent you're attacking. Don't touch any of your creatures yet—if you do, you're just giving away free information! If you start tapping creatures without giving your opponent a chance to do something, he can make you back up.

Now your opponent has priority, temporarily, and can announce a fast effect. This is a favorite time for using effects that tap creatures, since a tapped creature won't be able to attack.

If your opponent does announce any fast effects, your attack is canceled. You're still in your main phase, and after this batch of effects resolves, you can cast sorceries, summon creatures, play a land, or do any of the other main phase actions. Then you can declare your attack again if you still want to.



Figure 2.6. This player sneakily avoided casting his *Ball Lightning* before declaring his attack, hoping that his opponent would use the *Druid* to tap one of the small creatures. His opponent co-operated, and is about to get an unpleasant surprise!

GOTCHA!

When your opponent announces an attack, you can use a fast effect like that of the *Elder Druid* to tap one of his creatures. That creature won't be able to attack. One trick to watch out for, though—when you use a pre-attack fast effect, you throw your opponent back into the pre-attack main phase. A sneaky opponent may count on you to do this, and hold onto a summon spell for a creature with the no-summoning-sickness ability—such as *Ball Lightning* or *Ambush Party*—instead of casting it before announcing his attack. Now when you make the expected play of using the *Druid* to tap something, he can summon the creature and then restart his attack. You've already used up your *Druid's* ability for this turn, so you won't be able to stop this new larger attacker (figure 2.6).

If your opponent chooses not to use a fast effect, then any mana left in either player's mana pool drains, causing manaburn. Then the attack starts. The attack itself consists of these steps:

1. Declare and tap attacking creatures.
2. Fast effects.
3. Declare blocking.
4. Fast effects.
5. Resolve damage.
6. Resolve "end of combat" effects.

Step One. Declare and Tap Attacking Creatures

The attacker declares and taps all of the creatures which are going to attack, either singly or in groups. If any creatures are required to attack for some reason, they take priority over the other creatures—the “must attack” creatures must be declared either before, or at the same time as, any creatures that aren’t required to attack. Fast effects are illegal during this step, unless the card specifically says that it should be used at this time. For example, if one of your creatures is enchanted with Brainwash (figure 2.7), you have the option of paying the three mana at the time you’re declaring attackers.

Figure 2.7. Paying the cost for Brainwash is one of the few effects played during the “declare attackers” step. Similarly, Hipparion’s cost is paid while declaring blockers.



now unless the card specifically says you can use it at this time. Once a creature is blocked, it stays blocked, no matter what happens to the blocker after this step.

Step Four. Fast Effects

Exactly the same as step two. This is the last chance for either player to use fast effects during the attack, so this is where most of the spell-casting usually happens.

Step Five. Resolve Damage

Now, each creature which is still in the combat deals damage equal to its power. Unblocked attacking creatures damage the defending player, while blocked creatures and blocking creatures damage each other. If two or more creatures gang up to block one attacker, the attacking player decides how to split up the damage between them.

**Step Two. Fast Effects**

First chance for using fast effects. Both players can cast and respond to as many fast effects as they want during this step, following all the normal rules for fast effects. Usually, though, there won't be many—it's often best to wait until step four to use a fast effect. We'll discuss this later, in the section on strategies for using fast effects during the attack.

Step Three. Declare Blocking

Very similar to step one, except that blockers don't tap. The defending player decides which creatures—if any—are going to block, and assigns each of them to block one specific attacking creature. As with step one, no fast effects are legal

NULL ATTACK

Strange as it may seem, it is legal to declare an attack when you don't have any creatures, or to declare an attack but then not choose any creatures in step one. This is called a "Null Attack." You might do this if your opponent has mana floating in his pool, to force him to either spend it or take manaburn. Or if you have creatures but don't actually want to attack, you might declare an attack anyway to see if you can trick your opponent into using up a spell or effect on something you don't care about.

Important rule to remember: spells and effects which prevent creatures from dealing or receiving combat damage only apply to this step, not to other damage, even if it happens during the attack. Many new players miss this rule.

Once the damage has been assigned, you go through the normal damage-prevention and resolution steps, just as you would outside the attack.

Step Six. Resolve “End of Combat” Effects

The final step in the attack is to resolve any “end of combat” effects, such as the Thicket Basilisk's ability (figure 2.8). Once all such effects are resolved, both players' mana pools drain again, causing manaburn if necessary. Then the main phase resumes.



Figure 2.8. “End of combat” effects, like these, resolve in step six.

Now that the rules for combat are fresh in your mind, we can start talking about the strategic decisions you need to make.

Deciding When and How to Attack

If you have creatures and your opponent has none, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that you should attack. Most duels, though, involve creatures on both sides. Deciding when to attack and when not to—and which creatures to attack with, if you do attack—is one of the key skills you must master to become a good Magic player.

Attacking carelessly is a good way to lose a duel. The rules of Magic are designed to give several advantages to the defending player.

The Defender

Gets to choose which creatures to engage.

Can gang up two or more blockers to kill one attacker.

Always has more information when making choices.

Does not disable creatures by using them in combat.

Speaks last when deciding whether to use fast effects.

We'll say more about these advantages, and how they affect the attacker's decisions, as we go

along. We'll also talk about them later, in the section dealing with the defender's choices.

The attacker does have a few advantages to help make up for these.

The Attacker

Can choose not to have an attack at all.

Has full resources available during the attack without giving up any spell-casting.


Can use non-fast-effect spells to clear the way for an attack.

Can prevent a blocker from dealing damage by tapping it.

The first of these advantages is the most important. When it's your turn, you can examine the creatures and other permanents each player has on the table, look at the cards in your hand, and make your best guess about what cards your opponent might be holding. Putting all this together, you can decide whether an attack at this point would be good or bad for you. If the answer is “bad” you simply don't attack. Of course, a few cards take this choice away from you. If you play with a Primordial Ooze, for example, then you must attack whether you want to or not (figure 2.9). That's the price for using the card.



Figure 2.9. If you have a creature with a “must attack” ability in play, then you have to declare an attack even if it's bad for you.

 Some out-of-print cards can force your opponent to attack. Figure 2.10 shows a few of these.

The trick, then, is deciding whether an attack would be good for you. This can range from quite easy to fairly complicated, depending on how many cards are in play on both sides and what special abilities they have. We'll start with simple examples and work our way up to more complex ones.

Simple Attacks

The basic rule for attacking—and for any other play you might make, for that matter—is to do it only when the benefits outweigh the costs. We already mentioned the simplest of all attack decisions—the case where you have creatures and your opponent has none. In this case, the benefit is the damage you're dealing to your opponent, and the cost is only that your creatures will be tapped until next turn. If your creatures have no special abilities, then all you lose by having them tapped is the ability to block. Against an opponent with nothing in play, this loss is trivial. The only way it could actually cost you anything is if your opponent casts a spell on the following turn which either:



Figure 2.10. These cards force your opponent to attack.



Figure 2.11. A few creatures can attack on the turn summoned, taking you by surprise, but that's generally not enough reason to reserve creatures for blocking.

Creates a creature that can attack immediately (figure 2.11), or

Prevents your creatures from untapping normally (figure 2.12).



These possibilities are rare enough that you can pretty much ignore them unless you have a reason to think your opponent is playing with those cards.

Figure 2.12. If all your creatures are tapped and your opponent casts one of these, you could be in trouble.

Consider the case where you and your opponent each have a creature. If you attack and your opponent blocks, there are four possibilities, depending on the power/toughness of each creature:

1. Your creature dies and your opponent's creature lives (figure 2.13a).
2. Neither creature dies (figure 2.13b).
3. Your opponent's creature dies and yours lives (figure 2.13c).
4. Both creatures die (figure 2.13d).

If your opponent's creature can kill yours without dying itself, as in case one, then attacking is a bad idea—you're losing a creature and gaining nothing.

If neither creature can kill the other, as in case two, then you're losing the ability to block with your creature on the following turn and still gaining nothing, so attacking in that situation is almost as bad.

Of course, if you have a card such as Giant Growth in your hand, then these obviously-bad attacks aren't bad after all. Sometimes you may make an obviously-bad attack even without such a card in your hand, bluffing your opponent into thinking you have one!

If your creature is big enough to kill your opponent's creature without dying, as in case three, then you should always attack—or should you? Keep in mind that your opponent isn't forced to block. He may choose to just let your creature through, taking the damage and saving his own creature. On his turn, your creature will still be tapped from attacking and unable to block. If you didn't summon another creature in the meantime, his creature will be able to attack you freely. So usually in a situation like case three you should attack—but if you won't be able to do enough damage to win and you're very low on life yourself, you may want to hold off.

Finally we have case four, where both creatures will kill each other if your opponent blocks. In this situation, as in case three, you need to consider whether you can afford to attack and have him not block. You also have to decide whether your creature is more valuable to you than your opponent's creature is to him. If it is, then attacking is a bad idea, since your opponent will probably be happy to settle for mutual destruction. The tricky part, though, is deciding how valuable each creature is.

Figure 2.13. The four possible outcomes for a one-on-one battle.



a



b



c



d



The Value of a Creature

How valuable a creature is to a player depends on many factors. Clearly, creatures with high power and toughness are more valuable than smaller creatures, and creatures with special abilities are more valuable than creatures with no abilities. If you attack with a 1/1 creature and your opponent has a 2/1 creature, both with no special abilities, your opponent is unlikely to block, because your creature is less valuable. Switch sides and consider attacking with a 2/1 creature when your opponent has a 1/1—now he'll probably be happy to block, since it's a good trade. Replace the 2/1 creature with a 1/1 with a nice special ability, such as Dwarven Warriors or Pradesh Gypsies, and the trade would be even more one-sided (figure 2.14).



Figure 2.14. Any of these creatures is more valuable than a 1/1 with no special abilities.

But is a 1/1 creature with flying more or less valuable than a 1/1 creature with regeneration? How about a 2/2 creature with no abilities (figure 2.15)? There's no "right" answer—it all depends on the current state of the duel and on what else the players have in their decks.



Figure 2.15. Which of these creatures is the most valuable? There's no "right" answer—it depends on what else is going on in the game.

For example, if your opponent is playing defensively and has a row of regenerating walls, then all of your creatures without special abilities are fairly worthless. A 1/1 flying creature is much more valuable to you no matter how large the ground-pounders are (figure 2.16).

Another example—if you have thirty creatures in your deck, then you can afford to kill them off with wild abandon. If your deck contains only a few creatures, then each of them is much more important and you'll almost never want to trade creatures with an opponent.

The main questions to ask yourself when you're deciding how valuable a creature is are:



Figure 2.16. If your opponent has several of these in play, then a 1/1 flier is more valuable to you than a huge non-flier.

How important is this creature in the current situation?

How essential is this creature to my deck's overall design?

How difficult do I think replacing the creature would be?

In the case of your own creatures, you can answer these pretty easily. You can see the current situation, and you know what's in your hand and your deck. For your opponent's creatures, it's much more difficult. Unless you've played enough duels against the same person to know more or less how his deck works, you'll just have to make a guess based on what cards you've seen and how he's been playing so far.

Multiple Creatures

In our examples so far, each player had only one creature. You only had three possible outcomes to consider—don't attack, attack and be blocked, or attack and not be blocked. In choosing whether to attack, you looked at those possible outcomes and picked the option that gave you the best result if your opponent makes the choice you'd like least.

The same rules of thumb apply to situations where more creatures are in play. To determine your best play, you could think about each of your legal combinations of attacking creatures

and the best—that is, the worst for you—way that your opponent could block that combination and compare those with the results of not attacking at all. Once you decided which outcome was best for you, you would then make that play.

This is all well and fine if you happen to be a computer. Unfortunately for us humans, though, the number of possibilities grows very quickly when you start adding more creatures to the mix, so thinking about each possible combination one at a time isn't really practical.

If you have two creatures, you have four choices. You can choose not to attack, or attack with both, or attack with either one of them by itself (figure 2.17). If you have three creatures, you'll have eight different possibilities to choose from. With four creatures, there are sixteen different choices, and so on.

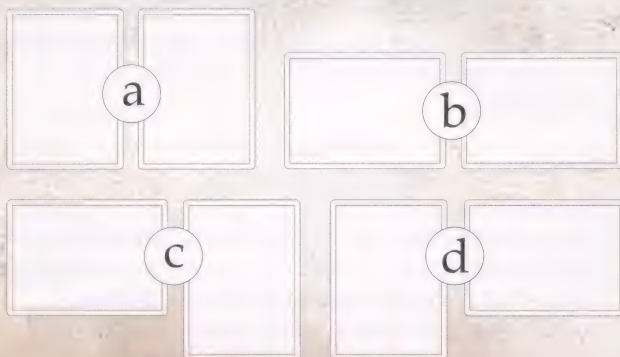


Figure 2.17. With two creatures you have four different options to think about for attacking.



Figure 2.18. When one creature attacks an opponent with two creatures, the defender has four different blocking options.

Then there's your opponent to consider. If you're attacking with one creature and your opponent has two creatures, he can choose to let it through, to block it with either one of his, or to block it with both of them together (figure 2.18). If you're attacking with two creatures, and your opponent also has two creatures, he has nine different choices about how to block. With more creatures on either side, the possibilities get even more complicated.

Short-cuts

As you can see, if both players have several creatures in play, the number of different possible combinations is going to be far too large to think about every one of them individually during a duel. Instead, you look for shortcuts that let you quickly eliminate whole groups of possibilities.

For example, if your opponent's creatures are all bigger than yours, you don't need to think about all the different ways he could block. You know he'll block and kill as many as possible. You would need to attack with at least one more

creature than he has to accomplish anything—if you do, then you can assume that he'll block and kill all the most dangerous ones, leaving the smallest one(s) to deal damage.

Similarly, if you have a creature that's larger than all your opponent's creatures, you really only need to think about three types of blocks:

Opponent doesn't block.

Opponent blocks with his least valuable creature. (This is often called a "speed bump," since it slows the attack down for a turn.)

Opponent gang-blocks with enough creatures to kill yours.



Figure 2.19. If you attack with your Orgg in this situation, then your opponent has sixteen different choices for blocking. Really, though, you only need to think about a few of them.

You don't need to even consider all the various ways that he could block and not kill your creature (figure 2.19), because your opponent isn't stupid—or at least, you should plan your play as if he isn't. If he blocks but doesn't block with enough to kill it, then he'll just throw his least valuable creature in the way.

Another shortcut works because creatures remain in play from turn to turn, and usually only one or two are added or removed each turn. If you figured out last turn that attacking would be a bad move, and you haven't played anything

new or destroyed any of your opponent's creatures since then, you don't need to re-figure—it's still going to be a bad idea. If you added a creature, and your opponent added an equal-sized or larger creature, then you still won't want to attack—your opponent could block your new creature with his new creature, and do everything else the same as he would have the previous turn.

This shortcut can sometimes lead you astray, though, so be careful! Sometimes you'll discount a card that's not useful in the current setting, and keep ignoring it through the following turns, even after something else changes that makes it no longer useless. It's a good idea, if you get into one of these long stand-offs, to re-evaluate the whole battlefield once in a while to make sure you haven't developed a blind spot.

Deciding When and How to Block

As we mentioned in the previous section, the defender has a number of advantages over the attacker. The defending player:

- Gets to choose which creatures to engage.
- Can gang up two or more blockers to kill one attacker.
- Always has more information when making choices.
- Does not disable creatures by using them in combat.
- Speaks last when deciding whether to use fast effects.

Let's look at these a little more closely, and see how you can make use of them.

As the defending player, you have complete control over what battles between creatures will be fought. You can let some attackers through and block others. You can trade off equal creatures, or you can assign your better creatures to block things that they can kill, and use throw-away creatures as “speed bumps” to keep from being damaged by the more dangerous attackers. You can gang up to kill a dangerous attacker, and let the less dangerous ones go by.

As an example of how powerful this choice can be, consider a situation where both players have an identical set of assorted-sized creatures. If your opponent were foolish enough to attack with everything in this situation, you could block each of his creatures with the next-larger one of your own, as shown in figure 2.21. This would result in you killing all but one of his creatures without losing any of yours. You could either throw your Goblin in front of the Hill Giant as a speed bump, or just take the 3 damage from the Hill Giant, depending on whether you'd rather keep the Goblin alive or have 3 more life.

Figure 2.21. The defender's advantage—with this sort of a mixed creature assortment, the defender can kill all but one attacker without losing a creature.

<div style="text-align: center;">ATTACK</div>  <p>The voracious dynamics of Marsh Viper's behavior differs from those of most of its kin. The slow, languid, 12-foot-long snake is a voracious predator of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Marsh Viper's venomous bite can kill its victims in a matter of minutes. Marsh Viper's venomous bite can kill its victims in a matter of minutes.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">BLOCK</div>  <p>If Marsh Viper damages any player, he or she gets two poison counters. If any player has ten or more poison counters, he or she loses the game.</p> <p>"And the serpents rob an vermin fangs In human gore instead." —Edgar Allan Poe, "The Conqueror Worm"</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">ATTACK</div>  <p>If Marsh Viper damages any player, he or she gets two poison counters. If any player has ten or more poison counters, he or she loses the game.</p> <p>"And the serpents rob an vermin fangs In human gore instead." —Edgar Allan Poe, "The Conqueror Worm"</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">BLOCK</div>  <p>Don't try to outrun one of Dominaria's grizzlies: it'll catch you, knock you down, and eat you. Of course, you could run up a tree. In that case you'll get a nice view before it knocks the tree down and eats you.</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">ATTACK</div>  <p>Don't try to outrun one of Dominaria's grizzlies: it'll catch you, knock you down, and eat you. Of course, you could run up a tree. In that case you'll get a nice view before it knocks the tree down and eats you.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">BLOCK</div>  <p>The mountains of the Harbored Mountains are known for their lack of battle. They are also known for their lack of battle. They are also known for their lack of battle.</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">ATTACK</div>  <p>The mountains of the Harbored Mountains are known for their lack of battle. They are also known for their lack of battle. They are also known for their lack of battle.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">BLOCK</div>  <p>Fortunately, hill giants have large feet and eyes, so they can see and hear you well. Unfortunately, their blind spots are beneath the bottoms of their feet.</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">ATTACK</div>  <p>Fortunately, hill giants have large feet and eyes, so they can see and hear you well. Unfortunately, their blind spots are beneath the bottoms of their feet.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">CAN BLOCK</div>  <p>The voracious dynamics of Marsh Viper's behavior differs from those of most of its kin. The slow, languid, 12-foot-long snake is a voracious predator of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Marsh Viper's venomous bite can kill its victims in a matter of minutes.</p>



Figure 2.22. If you wanted to kill off the Hill Giant, you could block like this instead.



Gang-Blocking

Another big advantage of the defender is the ability to "gang-block." One of the most common mistakes made by beginners is to forget about this ability, and either make a careless attack or miss the chance to kill an attacking creature. Any number of your creatures can gang up to block a single attacking creature, and they'll all deal damage to it. This allows several small creatures to kill a larger creature. For example, in the attack we were just discussing, if you wanted to get rid of the Hill Giant, you could arrange your blocks as in Figure 2.22 instead. Together, the Marsh Viper and Grizzly Bears deal three damage to the Hill Giant, which is enough to kill it.

The only drawback of a gang block is that the attacking player will get to decide how to distribute damage from his creature among the



blockers. In this example, the Hill Giant does 3 damage. The attacking player could put all 3 damage on the Marsh Viper, or 2 on the Viper and 1 on the Bears, or 2 on the Bears and 1 on the Viper, or all 3 on the Bears. Since both of the blockers have a toughness of 2, one or the other will survive no matter how the damage is assigned. If, instead of a 3/3 Hill Giant, the attacking creature was a 4/3 Stone Spirit, then its 4 damage would be enough for the attacking player to kill both the blockers.

Blocking Doesn't Tap

Another advantage for the defender is that attacking taps a creature, disabling it for other purposes, while blocking doesn't. A creature that has just attacked won't be available to block on the following turn. Any time a player attacks with all his creatures, he leaves himself open for a potentially deadly counter-attack on the following turn.

Also, a creature that has just attacked cannot tap to power a special ability—a blocking creature can. This isn't quite as useful as you might at first think, though, because of another rule—a tapped blocker doesn't deal combat damage. For example, consider the D'Avenant Archer (figure 2.23) You might think that the Archer could kill two 1/1 attackers, or trade itself for an attacking 2/2 creature, by blocking and then tapping to do 1 point of damage. This won't work.

If the Archer blocks and then taps to deal a point of damage after blocking, then it won't get to deal combat damage.

If the Archer doesn't tap before damage dealing, then it won't get a chance to use its ability until the attack is over.

This rule can also bite you if your opponent has a card which can tap one of your creatures as a fast effect, such as the Aysen Bureaucrats. You need to watch out for these when deciding how to block. Remember the example where your Marsh Viper and Grizzly Bears blocked a Stone Spirit? Try that move when your opponent has Bureaucrats in play, and you'll be

Figure 2.23. If you block with a D'Avenant Archer and then use its special ability, it won't get to deal combat damage.



BLOCKERS WITH DAMAGE PREVENTION ABILITIES

One seeming exception to the "tapped blockers don't deal combat damage" rule causes a lot of confusion. Damage-prevention abilities aren't used until after the damage has been dealt. Tapping a blocker after it's already dealt its damage won't "undo" the damage.

Consider the Samite Healer (figure 2.24)—a 1/1 creature with the ability to tap to prevent one damage. If a Samite attacks, then it gives up its damage-prevention ability for that turn. A Samite on the defending side, though, can block an attacking 1/1 creature, deal lethal damage, and then tap to prevent the damage to itself, killing the attacker and living to tell the tale.



Figure 2.24. A Samite Healer can block and kill a 1/1 attacker and survive the experience.

sorry (figure 2.25). Your opponent can use the Bureaucrats to tap one of your creatures before damage dealing. Now that creature won't deal damage, so you won't do enough damage to kill the Stone Spirit. The Stone Spirit can still kill both of your blocking creatures, since being tapped only stops a blocker from dealing damage, and doesn't protect the blocker from receiving damage.



Figure 2.25. Your opponent used his Bureaucrats to tap your blocking Grizzly Bears. Now both of your creatures will die, and the Stone Spirit will live.

This is one example of how using a fast effect during the attack can radically change the outcome. Fast effects have so much impact on attacks, in fact, that they'll get a chapter all to themselves later. Now it's time to talk about some creature abilities that change the rules for combat, and how they can affect your strategy.

Creature Abilities

Creatures in Magic can have all sorts of abilities, including things as diverse as preventing damage, forcing discards, providing mana, and making other creatures bigger. In this section, though, we're only concerned with creature abilities that change the normal rules of combat—banding, evasion, first strike, and trample. Each of these changes the rules for one or two of the steps of the attack, as listed in Table 2.1.

These abilities can have a major impact on your strategy:

ATTACK STEP	AFFECTED BY
Declare Attackers	Banding
Declare Blockers	Evasion
Damage Resolution	Banding, First Strike, Trample

Table 2.1. Steps in the attack changed by creature abilities.

In a number of places throughout this chapter, we've said that something applies "unless the attacking creature has Trample ability". Now it's finally time to talk about Trample and other creature abilities that change the normal rules for combat, and how they affect strategy.

Banding

Banding is the most complicated creature ability in Magic, and causes more confusion than all the other creature abilities put together. Even at the Magic World Championships, judges for the sealed-deck events were asked to settle several disputes about banding. Many players fail to take full advantage of the banding ability, or even avoid playing with banding creatures, just because they don't understand it well. This is a shame, because banding can give a big edge to a player who knows how to take advantage of it.

Most of the confusion about banding comes from the fact that banding is really two different abilities. One can be used when you're attacking, changing the rules for the "declare attackers" step. The other one works automatically during damage resolution.

Banding on the Attack

One of the defender's normal advantages is that each attacking creature is on its own, while several defending creatures can gang up to block it. Banding changes this rule. When an attacking creature has the banding ability, it can join with another attacker to form an attacking band. If a creature is assigned to block either of the members of this band, the other member becomes blocked by that creature as well. When you get to the damage resolution step, everything in the band will deal damage to the blocker. The attacking player gets to choose how to divide up any damage the blocker does; he can put it all on one attacker, or spread it around.

Notice that a blocker is always "assigned to block" one and only one creature, even if that creature is part of a band. The other members of the band are blocked indirectly. This can make a big difference if one of the creatures has a blocking restriction or a special ability which triggers on a blocking assignment. For example, if a Labyrinth Minotaur (figure 2.25a) is assigned to block one member of a band, that creature won't untap next turn, but its partner will untap as normal. Another example: if a small creature and a large creature attack as a band, Ironclaw Orcs could be assigned to block the small creature and end up indirectly blocking the large one (figure 2.26).

Figure 2.25a. Some creatures, such as the Labyrinth Minotaur, have abilities that affect anything they're assigned to block. These abilities don't affect other creatures that are blocked indirectly.



ATTACK



BLOCK



Figure 2.26. The Ironclaw Orcs can't be assigned to block a Grapeshot Catapult. When they're assigned to block the Benalish Hero, though, they end up indirectly blocking the Catapult.

If you have several creatures with banding, you can have each of them join with a different attacker, making several two-creature groups, or you can have a bunch of them join the same attacker for one big group. A creature that doesn't have banding can be joined with, but can't join anything itself, so an attacking band will have no more than one non-banding creature.

When you're attacking, careful use of banding can make things quite unpleasant for your opponent. For example, say your opponent has a Hill Giant and you attack with a band of three 1/1 creatures. If he blocks, his Giant will die. You'll assign all the damage to one creature, so you'll end up trading a 1/1 for a 3/3—quite a bargain! Or consider the case where you have something really rude like a Seraph, along with one or more small banders. If the creatures attacked separately, your opponent would block and kill one of the small creatures. But when they attack as a band, your opponent must either block one of them, letting the Seraph take control of his Boars, or let them all through for a big chunk of damage (figure 2.27).

ATTACK



BLOCK



Figure 2.27. If the Boars block, it will be killed, and the Seraph will take control of it. The attacker can assign all the Boars's damage to the Hero or Battering Ram, losing only one creature in the exchange.

Note that banding does not allow creatures to share any special abilities, and also that it doesn't remove any abilities. The Seraph in that example didn't lose her flying ability by being banded with a ground creature. The Boars can't be assigned to block her—he can only be assigned to block the Hero or the Battering Ram.

Banding on the Defense

Banding when you're on the defending side is very different. Defending creatures already have the option to gang up on an attacking creature—they don't need any special abilities to allow this. The banding ability is not

used when blocking. In fact, when you're defending, the banding ability is never "used" at all. Instead, it's something that happens automatically when you reach the step in the attack where damage is assigned.

Normally, if two or more creatures gang up to block one attacker, the attacking player chooses how to split the damage. If at least one of the blockers has banding, though, then the defending player gets to parcel out the damage between them. This is the only difference that banding makes when you're defending! If the attacking creatures are banded, then each player gets to divide up the damage to his own creatures.

One common mistake is thinking that you can make an illegal block legal by using banding. For example, you have a Mesa Pegasus and a Kjeldoran Royal Guard, and your opponent is attacking with an Air Elemental (figure 2.28). You can't block the Elemental with the Guard, because the Guard doesn't have flying. Only the Pegasus can block.

ATTACK



Figure 2.28. The Royal Guard can't block the Air Elemental because he can't fly. Banding doesn't let him share the Pegasus's flying ability.

BLOCK



Figure 2.29. Only one out of a group of blockers needs the banding ability. Here, the defending player gets to decide where the *Craw Wurm's* damage goes.



Notice that you only need one bander to get the damage-distribution ability, no matter how many creatures are blocking. If your opponent attacks with a *Craw Wurm* and you block with three ordinary 1/1 creatures plus a *Benalish Hero*, you can put all the Wurm's damage onto one of the creatures, trading a 1/1 for a 6/4 (figure 2.29). If you happen to have a big wall such as the 0/8 *Wall of Stone*, or anything with regeneration, you could add that to the blocking group, assign all the damage to it, and kill the Wurm without losing anything.

One trick to watch out for—all that matters when you're deciding who gets to distribute an attacking creature's damage is whether a banding creature is currently blocking it now. It doesn't matter what blocked the creature in the first place. Take that last example, where the four weenies blocked the *Craw Wurm*, but give the Wurm's player an *Incinerate* to blast the *Benalish Hero*. Now when you reach damage resolution, there's no bander, so the Wurm's player gets to assign damage.

Evasion Abilities

Under normal circumstances, the defending player can assign any creature he wants to block any attacking creature. Evasion abilities change this rule. The most common evasion ability is flying. A creature that doesn't have flying cannot be



assigned to block a creature with flying. A creature that has flying can be assigned to block either type of creature.

Another common evasion ability is land-walking. This comes in as many varieties as there are types of land. Usually all you'll see is landwalk for the basic land types—*islandwalk*, *forestwalk*, and so on. It's possible, though, to have landwalk for special land types, such as *City-of-Brasswalk*. If the defending player has any land of the type matching an attacking creature's land-walking ability, then he can't assign anything to block that creature. Even another creature with the same landwalk ability can't block it.

The "Protection from" ability gives an evasion ability along with its other benefits. When a creature with "Protection from X" attacks, no

Deckbuilding tip. One combination that works very well is to put spells that change land types into a deck with landwalkers—*Evil Presence* in a deck with swampwalkers, for example, or *Phantasmal Terrain* in a deck with islandwalkers. That way you can make sure your opponent has the right type of land for your creatures to walk through.

creature matching “X” can be assigned to block it. For example, the Black Knight has Protection from White—if a Black Knight attacks, no white creatures can be assigned to block it.

Finally, besides the standard evasion abilities, some creatures have specialized evasion abilities. Figure 2.30 shows a few of these.

All evasion abilities follow the same rules.

Evasion only affects blocking assignments, not indirect blocks. Be careful about banding your evasive creatures. If a creature with an evasion ability attacks as part of a band, and some other member of the band gets blocked, the evasive creature will be blocked as well.

Evasion only affects the “assign blockers” step of combat. If one of your creatures is blocked, giving it an evasion ability afterwards won’t change the combat at all.

This second rule confuses a lot of players, so an example may help. Say you have two Grizzly Bears and a Flying Carpet, and your opponent has a Hurloon Minotaur (figure 2.31). If you attack with the Bears, your opponent will block one of them, killing it. You can’t wait and see which one he blocks and then use the Flying Carpet to let it escape—as soon as the block is declared, the Bear



Figure 2.30. Some specialized evasion abilities.



and the Minotaur are locked in combat, and it’s too late for the Bear to take to the air. Instead, you should attack with just one Bear, and use the Flying Carpet on it before the blocking step. Now your opponent won’t be able to block.

Flying Carpet (1)
 Illustration: Flying Carpet
 Ability: 2, ♠: Target creature gains flying until end of turn. If that creature is put into any graveyard this turn, bury Flying Carpet.

ATTACK

Grizzly Bears (1/1)
 Illustration: Grizzly Bears
 Ability: Don't try to outrun one of Dominaria's grizzlies: it'll catch you, knock you down, and eat you. Of course, you could run up a tree. In that case, you'll get a nice view before it knocks the tree down and eats you.

BLOCK

Hurloon Minotaur (1/2)
 Illustration: Hurloon Minotaur
 Ability: The minotaurs of the Hurloon Mountains are known for their love of battle. They are also known for their hymns to the dead, sung for friend and foe alike. These hymns can last for days, filling the mountain valleys with their low, haunting sounds.

Grizzly Bears (1/1)
 Illustration: Grizzly Bears
 Ability: Don't try to outrun one of Dominaria's grizzlies: it'll catch you, knock you down, and eat you. Of course, you could run up a tree. In that case, you'll get a nice view before it knocks the tree down and eats you.

ATTACK

Grizzly Bears (1/1)
 Illustration: Grizzly Bears
 Ability: Don't try to outrun one of Dominaria's grizzlies: it'll catch you, knock you down, and eat you. Of course, you could run up a tree. In that case, you'll get a nice view before it knocks the tree down and eats you.

Figure 2.31. If you attack with both Bears, the Hurloon Minotaur will block and kill one of them. Giving the Bear Flying after it’s been blocked won’t protect it.



Figure 2.32. The Skeletons will take lethal damage from the Knight's first strike. Even if the Skeletons regenerates, it won't get to strike back at the Knight, since regeneration removes a creature from combat.

In sealed-deck games and other limited environments, evasion abilities are one of the biggest keys to winning. In constructed decks they're not quite as powerful, since most decks will have ways to get rid of a dangerous creature—however, they can still win duels for you.

First Strike

A regular attack has only one damage-resolution step. All creatures deal their damage at the same time. First strike changes this rule by adding a second damage-resolution step.

If some of the creatures involved in a combat have first strike, then when you get to the damage step, only those creatures deal damage. Other than that, all the normal rules apply. Assign the damage to creatures, go through damage-prevention, put creatures in the graveyard, and all that just as you usually would.

Then, if any attacking or blocking creatures

are left who didn't already deal damage in the first strike step, they get their chance. Once again, you go through all the parts of damage resolution. Note that if an attacking or blocking creature regenerates, it is removed from the attack. This means that any creatures lethally damaged during the first strike step won't be there for this second step, even if they regenerated (figure 2.32).

Trample

Normally, a creature that's blocked can only damage the blocker, not the defending player. Even if the blocker is removed from play before damage dealing, the attacking creature can't get at the player. Trample changes this rule. Note that trample only works when the trampling creature is attacking. If it's blocking, or dealing damage using a fast effect, nothing special happens.



Figure 2.33. Your War Mammoth deals three trample damage to the Skeletons, so two damage tramples over to your opponent. It doesn't matter whether the Skeletons regenerates.

When a trampling creature is blocked, damage gets assigned to the blocking creature as usual. At the end of damage prevention, though, you compare the damage on the creature to the creature's toughness. Any trample damage above the toughness is redirected to the defending player right before the creature is destroyed. For example, a War Mammoth attacks and is blocked by a Drudge Skeletons (figure 2.33). The Mammoth deals 3 damage to the 1-toughness Skeleton. If no damage-prevention effects are used, then 2 damage tramples over to the defending player, regardless of whether the Skeletons regenerates or not.

Trample damage is different from regular damage in one other very important way. If a trampling creature's damage can't be assigned to any blocking creature, then it is assigned directly to the defending player. We'll give some examples of this in the section on fast effects during the attack.

Gang blocking a trampler is a risky business. One mistake beginners often make is to block an attacking trampler with a bunch of small creatures, thinking that this will reduce the amount of damage left to trample over. Not so!

If you attack with a trampling creature and your opponent blocks with a bunch of small creatures, you get to choose how to divide up the damage. If you want, you can spread it around to kill as many creatures as possible. You don't have to do that, though. You can assign all the damage to the smallest creature, leaving the others untouched. That way, all the damage above that smallest creature's toughness will trample over onto your opponent. Or, if your trampler is big enough, you can do a little of both—spread enough damage around to kill two or three creatures, and heap the rest onto one of them so it will trample through (figure 2.34). You don't have to "use up" all of the blocking creatures' toughnesses in order to damage the defending player—only one of them.



Figure 2.34. You can pile all the Mammoth's damage onto the Rats or the Initiates, killing it and doing 2 damage to your opponent. Or you can kill both of them and do 1 damage to your opponent. You probably don't want to put any on the Skeletons, since it will just regenerate.



If a trampling creature and a non-trampling creature attack as a band and damage a single blocker, only the trample damage can spill over. For example, if a 2/2 bander and a 3/3 trampler attack as a band and something blocks them, the blocker takes 2 regular damage and 3 trample damage. If the blocker has a toughness of 3, then 2 trample damage spills over. If it has toughness of 2 or 1, then 3 damage spills over.

Trample is very effective against opponents who have lots of small creatures or regenerating creatures in their decks. It's not as useful if your opponent has large creatures, since you won't usually do

enough damage to trample over. If your opponent doesn't use creatures, then trample is worthless, since nothing will be blocking your attackers anyway.

Figure 2.35. When a blocker takes trample and non-trample damage at the same time, apply the regular damage first. The defender takes two damage in the top scenario and three in the bottom scenario.

Creature Stand-offs

When both players in a duel are using creature-heavy decks, and neither one gets an extra-good or extra-bad hand at the beginning of the duel, they'll often end up in a position where each player has a bunch of creatures. Whoever attacks first will take heavy losses while his opponent loses few or no creatures, and will also leave

himself undefended against the counter-attack, so neither player dares to attack. Instead, they just keep putting more and more creatures into play. This is known as a "creature stand-off" (figure 2.36).

A stand-off isn't quite a stalemate. If it goes on long enough, and neither player has any way aside from creatures to damage the other or gain an advantage allowing him to attack, the duel will eventually end when one player runs out of cards. Counting on that as a way to win, though, is

a risky business. Instead, you should make sure that you have some cards in your deck which will let you win in a stand-off situation. Stand-off breakers can take several forms.





Some possibilities include:

Non-combat damage.

Creatures with evasion abilities.

Mass destruction.

Creature generators

Figure 2.36. A typical creature stand-off. Neither player dares to attack.

Non-combat damage

Any way of dealing damage outside of combat may work to break a stand-off. Figure 2.37 shows a few. Direct-damage spells like Fireball and Disintegrate can remove enough of your opponent's creatures to make it safe for you to attack, or can wipe out your opponent directly if you have enough mana. Cards such as Cursed Land or Wanderlust, which deal damage every turn, put time on your side—your opponent will have to take the initiative and attack before his life gets eaten away. Small re-usable sources of direct damage, such as Prodigal Sorcerer or Rod of Ruin, can pick off small creatures and also nibble away at your opponent's life.



Figure 2.37. Cards such as these that let you deal damage without attacking can win the game for you in a stand-off situation.

Evasion

Any creature that can't be blocked will win a stand-off for you, unless your opponent finds a way to destroy it. Flying creatures are good to have. If your opponent has no flyers, they're unblockable and will probably give you the game. If your opponent does have flyers, they'll extend the stand-off into the air and keep him from using his own flyers to win. Completely unblockable creatures are best, though. These include landwalkers if your opponent has—or can be given—the appropriate land type, regular creatures made unblockable by other cards (figure 2.38), or any creature with a specialized evasion ability if your opponent doesn't have the right kind of blockers.

Figure 2.38. Cards like these can make one of your creatures unblockable.



Reset Buttons

A rather drastic way to end a stand-off is to use a “reset button” which wipes out all the creatures (figure 2.39). If you’ve kept the right cards in your hand, you can make a fairly quick recovery after blowing everything up. Hopefully, your opponent won’t have the right cards and will be easy prey. This can backfire, though—if your opponent recovers more quickly than you, you’ve just given him the game.

Figure 2.39. These three cards can serve as “reset buttons” to start things over after the game reaches a stand-off.

Creature Generators

The opposite approach to the reset buttons is to use cards that let you build up your forces faster than your opponent can. A number of enchantments and artifacts will let you create a token creature every turn, in addition to any summon spells you cast (figure 2.40). Once your army becomes large enough, you can swarm past your opponent’s blockers. Some token creatures are strong enough to attack with no help—others, such as the ones from Breeding Pit and Caribou



Range, will need their power raised before they can deal damage. Anything that gives a bonus to all your creatures works very well in combination with these—Bad Moon and Crusade are especially appropriate (figure 2.41).

Figure 2.40. Some creature generators.



Bad Moon and Crusade are especially appropriate (figure 2.41).



Figure 2.41. Use one of these along with a card that generates 0/1 token creatures and you’ll grow an impressive army.

Figure 2.42. The fastest way to create massive numbers of token creatures.



The best card for creating massive numbers of token creatures is *Goblin Warrens* (figure 2.42). As soon as you have two Goblins to get started, you can use it to create several more every turn, providing you have sufficient mana. Also, when you do attack, the *Warrens* allows you to sacrifice Goblins that get blocked by larger creatures and are about to die anyway to create new, untapped Goblins which can block your opponent's counter-attack.

Other Stand-off Breakers

Green traditionally relies on creatures for most of its damage, so it has several other excellent stand-off breakers (figure 2.43). *Winter Blast* can tap all your opponent's creatures, leaving him unable to block. (A black spell, *Word of Binding*, can also do this). *Lure* also prevents most from blocking. Cast *Lure* on one of your creatures and then attack with everything. All your opponent's creatures must block the Lured creature, so the rest of your forces get through. This can be risky, though. If your opponent has a spell in hand that can destroy the Lured creature before he blocks, he'll be able to block as he wishes and wipe out most of your army. When doing either of these, a *Fog* in your hand will ensure that you survive the counter-attack if you don't manage to do enough damage to win this turn.



Figure 2.43. Green has a number of good stand-off breakers.

Several of the stand-off breakers we've mentioned are fast effects. In the next chapter, we'll discuss other ways that using fast effects during the attack can help your strategy.

Combat in Magic isn't just a bunch of creatures slugging it out. Every creature is working for a wizard, after all—and those wizards have a very personal interest in the battle. Start throwing spells and effects into the mix, and things can really get interesting!

Fast effects come in two types: special abilities from cards in play, and spells. Both types follow the same rules, and can be used at all sorts of different times. In this chapter, though, we'll focus on using fast effects during the attack. Your first chance to use fast effects comes after the attackers are committed but before blocking is declared. For most types of effects, though, you'll want to wait for the second chance, which is after blocking but before damage dealing.

Fast effects can do all sorts of different things. Many of the ones useful during attacks, though, fall into a few categories; those are the ones we'll cover in this chapter. These categories include:

Changing creatures' power and/or toughness.

Destroying/removing creatures.

Creating creatures.

Causing damage.

Messing with damage.

Changing Power and Toughness

Many creatures have a built-in ability which allows you to spend mana to increase their power



Figure 3.1. Pumpable creatures.

FAST EFFECTS IN ATTACK

and/or toughness. These are often called "inflatable" or "pumpable" creatures (figure 3.1). Besides the creatures with built-in pumping abilities, any creature can be made pumpable by using an enchantment. These enchantment abilities work exactly like the built-in pumping abilities, inflating whatever creature the enchantment is on (figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2. Creatures without built-in pump abilities can become pumpable via enchantments.

Figure 3.3. Wait until after your opponent blocks before pumping the Shade; that way you won't end up wasting mana.



Pumping effects can be used at any time, not just during the attack. For example, if someone casts Incinerate on your Mesa Falcon, you could save it by spending six mana. Most of the time, though, pumping is used when you're attacking or blocking.

To get the best use out of a pumpable creature, you should almost always wait until the fast effects step after blocking to use its ability (figure 3.3). If you're attacking, then at that point you'll know whether your creature is blocked and what's blocking it. If your creature isn't blocked and it has a power-pumping ability, you can pump it as high as you can afford, in order to deal as much damage as possible. If it just has a toughness-pumping ability and isn't blocked, then there's

no need to pump it at all — doing so would just be a waste of mana.

If your creature is blocked, or if you're the one blocking, then you may be able to pump it just enough to match or exceed the other creature's power or toughness. This will keep your creature alive or allow it to kill your opponent's creature, or possibly both. If you don't have enough mana to accomplish either of these, then you can avoid pumping it at all, saving your mana for better uses.

Waiting to pump until after the blocking step is especially important if you're attacking with two pumpable creatures. If you pump ahead of time, your opponent has a big advantage, since he now knows what the final power and tough-



ness of your creatures will be. He can block with something big enough to kill one, throw a speed bump in its way, or let it through, without worrying about surprises. If he does block one or both, you'll probably find that either you wasted mana making a creature bigger than it needed to be, or that you spent too much mana on one creature and left yourself unable to save the other that's being blocked by something large.

Pumper versus Pumper

One situation that occasionally comes up involves two pumpable creatures, one on each side. For example, you attack with Carrion Ants and your opponent blocks with a Frozen Shade (figure 3.4). You could just pump all your mana into your Ants, but let's assume you have some other things you'd like to spend mana on after the attack, if you have any left. Your best play is to put one mana into the Ants, making them just large enough to kill the Shade and survive, and then wait to see what your opponent does. If he pumps the Shade, then you get another chance to use fast effects, and you can once again make the Ants just big enough to do the job. This repeats until one or the other of you runs out of mana or decides not to pump any more.

External Pumping Effects

Some cards have the ability to temporarily pump any creature (figure 3.5). When you have one of these in play, it's almost as good as having a built-in pump ability on all of your creatures. Your opponent has to take that potential +1/+1 or +2/+2 into account when deciding whether to attack or block. Often you won't even need to actually use the ability — just the threat of having it available will stop your opponent.

Figure 3.5. Cards like these are excellent when you have several creatures in play, since they give each of your creatures the potential of getting temporarily larger.

TIMING TIP

If you're planning to pump a creature several times, you can do it two different ways. You can do each pump in response to the previous one, then let them all resolve in one batch, or you can pump once, let it resolve, pump again, let it resolve, and so on. The second method is more tedious; however, it will sometimes save a creature. For example, consider the case where you have a Frozen Shade and four untapped Swamps. You don't know it, but your opponent has an Incinerate in his hand. If you do your pumps in response to each other, he can respond to the last pump by casting Incinerate; this will kill the 0/1 Shade before any of the pumping effects resolve. If you do your pumps one at a time and let each resolve before doing the next one, though, your opponent is stuck. If he responds to any one of your pumping effects, you'll do the rest of your pumps as a response to the Incinerate. This will make the Shade 3/4 when the Incinerate resolves, so it will live.



Figure 3.4. When pumpers meet in combat, players will usually end up taking turns pumping a little at a time.



Figure 3.6. *Oddly enough, Ashnod's Transmogrant is often more useful as a threat than as an actual effect.*



For example, if you have a 1/1 creature and a Coral Helm with enough mana to use it, an opponent with just a 2/2 creature won't dare to attack you.

Another interesting card, Ashnod's Transmogrant (figure 3.6), can be used once and only once to permanently pump a creature by +1/+1. Like the temporary pumpers, the Transmogrant is often worth more as a threat than it is when you actually use it. When the Transmogrant is sitting there as a threat, your opponent must think of all your non-artifact creatures as possibly having the +1/+1; once you actually use it, only one creature has the bonus. If your opponent has a Transmogrant, try to force him to use it as soon as possible so you don't have this sort of threat to worry about.

Pumping Spells: Surprise!

The final category of pumping effects are spells, as shown in figure 3.7. The big advantage of these is the surprise factor. If you attack with Killer Bees and you have three untapped Forests, your opponent knows that it could get +3/+3 at any time. He will plan his blocks appropriately. If you attack with a regular creature and you have a Giant Growth in your hand, though, your opponent won't know about the potential +3/+3. He's quite likely to block with something that seems safe, which you can then kill by casting the Giant Growth.

Beginning players will often attack an unguarded opponent the second or third turn of the game and then use Giant Growth or Blood Lust to do an extra 3 or 4 damage. Experienced players, though, know that these spells are far more valuable when used in a creature versus creature situation. Casting Giant Growth to do 3 extra damage to your opponent gives you just that 3-damage advantage and that's it. Casting Giant Growth when your creature is blocked, though, can kill the blocker



Figure 3.7. *These are all the instants in Fifth Edition which pump a creature. (Others are available in various expansion sets.)*



Figure 3.8. Is this Sprite feeling suicidal, or does your opponent have a Giant Growth in his hand?



and save your creature at the same time. This two-creature advantage will quickly add up to a lot more than 3 damage. Of course, if you find out later in the duel that you're playing an opponent with no creatures, you can always use the pumping spell at that time.

Anticipating Surprises

We said a moment ago that when you have a Giant Growth in your hand, your opponent won't know about the potential +3/+3. Actually, that's not quite true. Experienced players know all of the commonly-used spells. You should memorize all of the spells shown in Figure 3.7, and keep them in mind whenever you're facing an opponent with that color of mana. Any time you see someone with an untapped Forest and a card in their hand, for example, you should keep in the back of your mind the possibility that they just might have a Giant Growth. In most cases, you shouldn't let this thought change your play—bluffing is a big part of the strategy of **Magic**, and the times when your opponent

doesn't have the right card will outnumber the times when he does. However, if it's going to make the difference between winning and losing, play it safe.

For example, you have a Phantom Monster and your opponent attacks with a Scryb Sprite (figure 3.8). This is a suicidal move for the Sprite: the Phantom Monster can easily block and kill it. However, if your opponent has a Giant Growth, he can use it to make the Sprite 4/4, killing the Monster and surviving. (We'll assume that you don't have any counterspells in your own hand.)

If you only have 2 to 4 life left, you should call the bluff. If you don't, and he really does have a Giant Growth, he wins. Even if you have more life, you'll usually want to call the bluff because if you don't he'll just keep doing it, and if he doesn't have a Giant Growth now, he could draw one next turn. On the other hand, if you have plenty of life left and your Phantom Monster is going to win the duel for you in the next turn or two, you can't afford to call the bluff. Losing 1 life or even 4 life won't hurt you that much, but losing the Phantom Monster

could well cost you the game.

Red's Blood Lust and black's Howl from Beyond are the other common spells you should be especially aware of and watch out for. Blood Lust is much like Giant Growth, except that it won't save the creature. Howl from Beyond is the most dangerous of all late in a long game, when both players usually have plenty of land in play. You can often win a duel by sneaking a small creature past the enemy lines and then Howling for massive damage. Any time your opponent has a lot of untapped land, including at least one Swamp, you should keep this possibility in mind. Most of the time he won't have a Howl from Beyond, but the times that he does are deadly.

Destroying/Removing Creatures

The next big category of effects commonly used during combat are those that destroy, bury, or remove a creature. Direct-damage effects which deal enough damage to kill a creature also fall into this category (figure 3.9). So does anything which turns an attacking or blocking creature



Figure 3.9. Some instants that can get rid of creatures in the middle of an attack.

into a non-creature, such as Disenchanting an Animate Artifact, or which takes control of an opponent's attacking or blocking creature, since either of these will remove the creature from combat.

You should keep two basic rules in mind when dealing with these types of effects:

Damage resolution is the last thing that happens during an attack. If you get rid of an attacking or blocking creature before the damage step, then that creature won't get to deal damage.

Once an attacking creature is blocked, it stays blocked even if the blocking creature vanishes. If the attacker doesn't have the Trample ability, it won't deal any damage.

REGENERATION DURING COMBAT

If a creature regenerates during an attack, it is removed from combat. This means that if you hit an attacking or blocking creature with a destruction effect, it's guaranteed to keep the creature from dealing damage. Even if your opponent manages to save the creature by using a regeneration spell or ability, it won't be harassing you until next turn.

The most satisfying time to use a destruction effect is right after your opponent casts a spell on the target creature. You not only got rid of the creature, but you also made your opponent

waste the spell. It's almost as satisfying to destroy a pumpable creature right after your opponent spends all his mana pumping it — you haven't made him waste a spell in that case, but at least you've kept him from casting any other spells this turn. Finally, for one-size-fits-all

effects like Terror, destroying a big dangerous creature is obviously better than destroying a small less-dangerous creature.

If you have a destruction instant in your hand and you're being attacked by a small creature, think about whether you can afford the damage. If you can, you may want to just hold onto your spell, saving it for a better target.

When you're attacking, the best use of destruction effects depends on what your current

Figure 3.10. If you use the *Terror* on one blocker, the *Derelor* will kill the other two and not even get killed itself.



goal is. If you want to deal as much damage as possible to your opponent, then you need to use your destruction effects before the blocking step — perhaps even before starting your attack. That way, your opponent won't be able to use the destroyed creature to block. If you wait until after your opponent has blocked, your creature (unless it has *Trample*) won't be able to damage your opponent even if you get rid of the blocking creature.

larger creature. If you attack, your opponent may throw one creature out as a speed bump, or he may decide to block with several creatures in order to kill yours (figure 3.10). He expects your *Derelor* to kill two of the blockers—any two of your choice—but figures this is a reasonable trade. If you cast your *Terror* on the *Hurlloon Minotaur* now, though, your *Derelor* will kill the remaining two creatures and they won't deal enough damage to kill the *Derelor*.



BLOCK



ATTACK



Figure 3.11. The Bird Maiden is just a speed bump to the Shivan, but she'll deal 1 damage as she dies. After the combat is over, you'll cast Blood Lust on the Shivan, making it 9/1. Now that insignificant Bird Maiden damage is lethal.

One spell which we already mentioned in the “pumping” section can also, strangely enough, be used to destroy a creature: Blood Lust. The trick is to cast it on an opponent's creature after the creature has already been damaged. The Blood Lust reduces the creature's toughness; if this leaves the creature with damage equal to or greater than its toughness, the creature dies (figure 3.11). You could also cast the Blood Lust during combat, before damage-dealing, but doing it this way gives one added bonus: since the creature is being killed by “old” damage, it's too late for a damage-prevention or damage-redirection spell to save the creature.

Return to Hand Effects

One type of creature-removal effect—those that return a creature to its owner's hand—are particularly interesting because they're useful both for

getting rid of an opponent's creature and also for rescuing your own creature. Return-to-hand effects are one of blue's specialties (figure 3.12).

For opponent's creatures, a return-to-hand effect is only a temporary solution. If you don't do something else about the problem, the creature will be back in a turn or two to start pestering you again. However, since blue is the color of

counterspells, a common tactic is to return a creature to its owner's hand and then counter the spell when the opponent tries to recast it.



Figure 3.12. Each of these can return a creature to its owner's hand at a critical time.

Return-to-hand effects can be very effective for use on your own creatures. Because of the “once a creature is blocked it stays blocked” rule, you can block an attacking creature with a smaller creature and then Unsummon your blocker before damage resolution. The attacker will be left flailing away at thin air, unable to deal any damage. If your opponent was attacking with just one creature, it might be better just to Unsummon that creature, but when your oppo-

ATTACK



Figure 3.13. By blocking and then Unsummoning your own Sprite, you can stop the whole band from damaging you.

BLOCK



ment is attacking with a band, this trick will let you stop all of them (figure 3.13). Unsummoning your own creature works even better in combination with a special ability like the Thicket Basilisk's (figure 3.14). Anything the Basilisk blocks will be destroyed at the end of combat, even if the Basilisk itself is no longer around. You can also attack with the Basilisk, and then—if your opponent blocks with something large enough to kill it—yank it back to your hand.



Figure 3.14. Anything blocking or blocked by this fellow will be destroyed at the end of combat, even if you've Unsummoned him before then.

White has one creature with the return-to-hand ability built in, the Blinking Spirit, affectionately known as "Blinky" by players who like it and as "the most annoying creature in Magic" by those who don't (figure 3.15). Blinky makes a superb blocker; as long as you have enough mana, you can repeatedly block a large creature with Blinky, blink it back to your hand, and recast it the next turn to do the same thing again. Blinky can also dodge any

spell that might destroy it. Getting rid of a Blinky is almost impossible without counterspells unless your opponent decides to trade creatures.

BLINKY VERSUS BLINKY AND THE ACTIVE PLAYER RULE

It's important to remember the "active player rule" when using Blinky, especially if both players have them. The active player rule states that the player whose turn it is uses as many fast effects as he wishes, and then the other player can either use a fast effect of his own or let the game move on to the next step in whatever's happening.

If a Blinky attacks and another Blinky blocks, the attacking player has to decide first whether to blink. If he does, then there's no reason for the defending player to do so. If the attacking player decides not to blink, then the choice passes to the defending player: he can use a fast effect, or say "done." If he says "done" then the two Blinkies will kill each other. It's rather like a game of "chicken." If he uses a fast effect, though, then the attacking player gets another chance.



Figure 3.15. The most annoying creature in Magic?

Killing Two Birds with One Stone

One destruction spell, Broken Visage (figure 3.16), deserves special mention. If you're being attacked by two or more creatures, you can use this spell to kill two birds with one stone. Cast it on the biggest attacking creature before declaring your blockers. This will bury that creature, and also give you a temporary Shadow creature which you can then use to block the next-biggest attacker, killing it as well.



Figure 3.16. If your opponent attacks you with two creatures, this spell will often let you take out both of them.

You can do a similar trick with the blue spell Ray of Command (figure 3.17). This one doesn't directly bury the target creature, but if two of the attacking creatures each have power greater than or equal to the other's toughness, you can cast Ray of Command to take control of one and then block the other with it. This will kill both creatures. You can also cast Ray of Command during your own turn, before attacking, to grab one of your opponent's potential blockers and attack with it — this gives you a temporary two-creature advantage.

Figure 3.17. This one's not quite as good for killing your opponent's creatures, but you can also use it for your own attack.



Creating Creatures

As we mentioned last chapter in the section on breaking standoffs, a number of cards allow you to bring a creature into play as a fast effect. Most of these are artifacts or enchantments which you can activate at any time to produce a token-creature (figure 3.18). A few are instants, such as Broken Visage.

Figure 3.18. Some cards that can create creatures in the middle of an attack.



Creatures created by fast effects still suffer from summoning sickness, so you can't create a creature and attack with it in the same turn. You can, however, create a creature during your opponent's attack and then block with that creature. This tactic is especially useful with cards where you don't know whether you'll get a creature or not, such as Bottle of Suleiman or the out-of-print Helm of Obedience (figure 3.19). By having the card in play, you present your opponent with the possibility of a large blocker, so he may choose not to attack.

Remember that fast effects aren't legal during the "declare blockers" step. If you want to create a creature and then block with it, you must create it in the fast effects step before declaring blockers. The attacking player always has the chance to use fast effects to destroy or disable the newly-created creature after it comes into play, before it has a chance to block. For example, if your opponent activates a Bottle of Suleiman and wins the coin-toss, and you have a Shatter or Disenchant in your hand, you can zap the Djinn as soon as it comes into play. If you do this, your opponent won't be able to use the Djinn to block. The same rule applies if you have a way to turn a non-creature into a creature as a fast effect.



Figure 3.19. These cards may or may not give you a creature when activated, but if your opponent is considering attacking, he has to take that possibility into account.



Figure 3.20. *Mishra's Factory*, an out-of-print land which can become an artifact creature.


 This rule is especially important to remember if you're using (or playing against) the out-of-print card *Mishra's Factory* (figure 3.20). When the defender turns a Factory into an Assembly Worker, the attacking player can use a *Disenchant*, *Incinerate*, or other fast effect to kill off the Worker before it can block. The only turn-to-creature card that this won't work for is the out-of-print *Jade Statue* (figure 3.21), which can only be activated during the "declare attackers" or "declare blockers" steps, not during the regular fast effects steps.



Figure 3.21. The out-of-print *Jade Statue* is an exception to the normal rules. It can only change to a creature during the attack steps where most fast effects are illegal.

Damage-dealing Effects

Most damage-dealing fast effects can be used at any time fast effects are legal, not just during combat. A few, such as those of the Crimson Manticore and the D'Avenant Archer, can only be used during the attack (figure 3.22). Neither type counts as “combat damage,” so spells like Fog won't stop it.

In discussing strategy, damage-dealing fast effects should be divided into two groups: those that deal enough damage to kill the target creature outright, and those that merely wound the target creature. If the effect will kill the target all by itself, you can think of it as a destruction effect, and use the tactics already discussed under destruction/removal.

Damage that isn't enough to kill a creature is useless by itself. For example, hitting a Craw Wurm with an Incinerate is a waste of a spell. At the end of the turn, the creature will heal and be as good as new (figure 3.23). However, when combined with damage from combat, direct damage is extremely effective.

Suppose your opponent attacks with the Craw Wurm and you block with a 1/1 creature like a

Mountain Goat. The Goat is barely a light snack for the Wurm, but it does deal 1 point of damage as it's being swallowed. Now an Incinerate will be enough to finish off the Wurm.



Figure 3.22. Some damage effects, such as these, can only be used during combat.



Figure 3.23. A Craw Wurm is too tough to be killed by Incinerate — you need 1 more damage from somewhere.

When you're trying to combine damage from combat with damage from fast effects, you have several choices. You can use the fast effect before or during combat, or you can wait until after the attack is over. In most cases, it's best to wait until after the attack so you can be sure of the combat damage. If you use your damage effect during the attack, your opponent might use a fast effect of his own to get rid of your creature or prevent it from dealing combat damage. If he does, your fast effect will have been wasted, since that damage alone won't be enough to kill his creature.

If you're playing against someone using blue spells, though, you may be better off casting your damage spell during the attack before blocking. That way, you can see whether your opponent is going to counter your spell before throwing away your creature. If the spell gets countered, you may want to block differently or not at all.

Using a damage effect before the attack is usually bad strategy, since your opponent probably just won't attack or block with the damaged creature. (Of course, if your goal just is to keep him from attacking or blocking this turn, this is exactly the result you want!)

Messing with Damage

After discussing damage effects, it's only logical to end with effects that fiddle with damage or with the ability to deal damage. It's very important to distinguish between these two types.

Effects that target damage, either preventing it or redirecting it, can only be used during the special damage-prevention step that happens each time damage is dealt (figure 3.24).

Effects that prevent a creature from dealing or receiving damage, or that give you the ability to prevent or redirect damage later in the turn, must be used before the damage is dealt; they cannot be used during damage resolution (figure 3.25).



Figure 3.26. This may look like a damage-redirection spell, but it's not.

One out-of-print card, *Martyrdom* (figure 3.26), causes a lot of confusion. *Martyrdom* looks like a damage-redirection spell to many players, but actually it's a regular spell which gives you the ability to redirect damage later in the turn. You need to cast it before the damage is resolved in order to use the ability.

Figure 3.24. Effects like these, that prevent or redirect damage, can only be used during the damage-prevention step.



Figure 3.25. These, however, are just regular fast effects — they can't be used during damage-prevention.

It's also important to remember the difference between combat damage and regular damage that just happens to occur during the attack. Combat damage happens in one specific step of the attack. Attacking and blocking creatures deal combat damage equal to their power, either to the creature they're facing or to the defending player. Spells such as *Fog* prevent creatures from dealing combat damage, but don't interfere with any other damage, even if it happens to be done by a creature during combat. For example, remember the *Crimson Manticore* from figure 3.22? *Fog* won't prevent you from using its special ability to kill a 1-toughness attacker.



ATTACK

BLOCK



Figure 3.27. None of the Boars' damage can be assigned to the blocking Merfolk, so they don't get to deal damage at all.

"Can't deal or receive" effects

Some spells and effects prevent a creature from dealing or receiving combat damage. If a creature with this ability blocks an attacking creature by itself, then the attacking creature won't get to deal any damage (figure 3.27). If the can't-receive-damage creature is part of a gang-block, all of the damage from the attacker must be assigned to one or more of the other blockers. There is, however, one important exception to this rule! If the attacking creature has Trample, and the damage can't be legally assigned to a blocker, then all of its damage goes directly to the defending player (figure 3.28).



ATTACK

BLOCK



Figure 3.28. Uh-oh. Now the Boars have trample, so all the damage that can't be assigned to the Merfolk goes straight to the defending player. Ouch!



These no-combat-damage effects are good for two different strategies. You can cast them on a small creature of your own, making that small creature able to block huge creatures without dying, like the Merfolk from Figure 3.27. Or you can cast them on your opponent's biggest creature, making that creature useless for attacking. Also, remember that none of these effects prevent a creature's special abilities, unless the ability requires dealing damage.



Figure 3.29. Casting Foxfire on the Basilisk avoids all the damage, and the Basilisk's ability will still destroy the blockers.

For example, you can attack with a Thicket Basilisk, and then, if your opponent blocks with several small creatures (or one big one) to kill it, cast Foxfire on the Basilisk (figure 3.29). None of them will deal damage, but the Basilisk's special ability will still destroy all of its blockers.

Prevention and Redirection

Damage-prevention and damage-redirection abilities can be used any time anything does damage. They work equally well on combat damage, damage from spells, and damage from other cards. For example, if you have a Circle of Protection: Black, and your opponent attacks you with some black creatures, you can pay one mana per black creature to the Circle to prevent all the damage. If your opponent casts Drain Life on you, you can pay another mana to the Circle and prevent the Drain Life damage, this will also keep your opponent from gaining any life, since the Drain Life didn't do any damage.

If your opponent uses Pestilence to damage everything, you can pay another mana to the Circle and prevent the damage to yourself (figure 3.30).



Figure 3.30. A Circle of Protection: Black works equally well against damage from any of these black sources.

The Circle can only protect you, not your creatures. However, if you have a Jade Monolith and a lot of mana, you could redirect the Pestilence damage from each of your creatures onto yourself instead, and then pay one mana to the Circle to prevent all of it. This works because redirecting damage doesn't change the source of the damage.

Regeneration is not a damage-prevention effect. Instead, it's used right at the time that a creature is about to be put in the graveyard. If an attacking or blocking creature regenerates, the creature is removed from combat and no longer counts as attacking or blocking.

Saboteurs

Some creatures have special abilities which can be used only if the creature attacks and isn't

Figure 3.31. Most saboteur abilities, including these, are traded off for dealing damage.



blocked. These creatures are known as “saboteurs”. Most saboteur abilities require you to give up dealing damage with the creature in order to use the ability (figure 3.31). These abilities are played as fast effects in the step before damage dealing. Note that you can use the ability even if the creature was already unable to deal damage for some other reason. For example, Fog won't stop Orcish Squatters from being able to steal a land. Also, if a creature has two or more saboteur abilities, you can use all of them. For example, if you cast Cloak of Confusion on your Orcish Squatters, then when they attack and aren't blocked you can make your opponent discard a card and also steal one of his lands.

A number of creatures have special abilities which trigger when they damage a player (figure 3.32). Sometimes these creatures are lumped in with the saboteurs, since the normal way for them to damage a player is to attack and not be



Figure 3.32. These creatures are sort of like saboteurs, but the effect is triggered by the damage.

blocked. However, their abilities work very differently. If you prevent the damage, or redirect it onto a creature, the ability won't trigger. For example, if you have Kjeldoran Royal Guard (figure 3.33) in play when an Abyssal Specter attacks you, you can use the Guard's ability to redirect the Specter's damage to the Guard and you won't have to discard a card. This cuts both ways, though. If one of these creatures damages a creature, and then part or all of the damage somehow gets redirected to the player, the ability will trigger. One way this can happen is if the creature gains Trample ability.



Figure 3.33. Use this fellow's ability on damage from any of the creatures in the previous figure, and the effect won't go off.

The attack ends after its damage-prevention step, so we'll end this chapter now. The next chapter deals with strategy for the rest of the duel.

Figure 4.1. All three of these spells are very strong first-turn plays, since your main limitation at the start of a duel is mana.



GENERAL PLAYING STRATEGY

Playing strategy in Magic is influenced very strongly by the type of deck that you're playing, as well as the type of deck you're playing against. Clearly, advice about when to use fast effects is irrelevant if you're playing a deck that only has creatures and enchantments. There are problems with giving out deck-specific strategies as well. For example, tips which are good for playing a deck designed to swarm your opponent with a horde of creatures will doom you if you're playing a deck with lots of counter-spells and defenses and only a few creatures.

Despite this, in this chapter we will cover some general tips and advice about playing strategy which apply to most deck types. Instead of just saying "do this" and "don't do that" we'll explain why doing this or not doing that is generally a good idea. We'll also point out a few of the exceptions and cases where you'll want to ignore the guidelines. This will help you decide whether a particular tip applies to the deck you're playing or not. Keep in mind that none of

these are rules — you'll always have to use your own judgement.

Stages Of The Duel

Every Magic duel is different. In each duel, though, you'll go through certain stages. Strategies and techniques which are important during the first few turns of the game are sometimes irrelevant later, when you have a big pile of land in play, and vice versa. So before we jump into talking about strategies and techniques, it's useful to look at each of the stages of a typical duel. We'll then discuss some tactics that mess with these stages, preventing a deck from properly developing.

Early Game: Mana-bound

At the beginning of a duel, you have a full hand of cards, but nothing in play. In particular, you have no mana. Unless you happen to have a zero-cost spell in your hand, all you can do is

play a land. Once you've played your first land, more options may open up; you might be able to cast a spell. Most of your hand, though, will still be dead wood at this point—completely useless until you build up your mana supply.

This condition is called being “mana-bound.” Drawing extra cards wouldn't help you a bit; you'd simply have to discard them at the end of your turn. Anything that gives you extra mana, though, is extremely powerful (figure 4.1). Casting Llanowar Elves, for example, might double your options next turn. Dark Ritual (Figure 4.2) deserves special mention: its mana is only good for one use, but it can let you cast a three mana spell the first turn. In a black/green deck it's not too uncommon to be able to summon a five mana creature the second turn, by casting one of the Figure 4.1 spells the first turn and Dark Ritual the second.



Figure 4.2. Black decks can get a huge speed boost at the beginning of the game with Dark Ritual.

Your most important decisions during this early stage usually involve which land to play. Sometimes you'll have an option as to which spell to cast, too, but more often you'll only have one spell in your hand which you have enough mana for, so all you'll be deciding is whether—or when—to cast it.

How long the mana-bound stage lasts depends on the type of deck you're using. If you're playing a “weenie deck” full of one- and two-cost creatures, then all you need is two lands and you'll be able to cast any spell in your deck. You'll stop being mana-bound on the second turn of the game. Other decks, with higher-cost spells, might need four or five lands in play before they can leave this stage.

The minimum amount of mana you'd need to be able to cast most of the spells in your deck is called the deck's “mana threshold.” You can determine a deck's mana threshold quite easily. Go through the deck and sort the spells into piles by the casting cost. Then count the number of cards in each pile.

If one pile is a lot larger than all the others, then that's your mana threshold. Your deck will be crippled until you reach that much mana, and will work reasonably well once you reach that point, even if you have some spells that you are still unable to cast.

If most of the spells are in a few piles, with a scattering of higher-cost spells, then the highest-cost pile with four or more cards in it is usually the mana threshold. If that pile is on its own though, and the costs right below it have few or no spells, then the next lower pile of that size may be the threshold — it depends on whether the spells in the higher-cost pile are critical to the theme of the deck or are just included as finishers in case of a long drawn-out duel.

If the piles are fairly even, or if the pile size gradually tapers down as the casting cost increases, then your deck doesn't have a sharp mana threshold. Take the total number of spells in the deck and multiply it by 2/3. Count from the cheapest pile up until you reach that number of spells — the casting cost for the pile you land on is roughly the mana threshold, but having a little less won't cripple the deck.

Once you have enough land (or other mana-producing cards) in play to reach your mana threshold, your strategy moves into the mid-game.



Mid-game: Lots of Choices

In the mid-game, you have enough mana available to be able to cast just about any spell in your hand (figure 4.3). You're still mana-bound to some extent. You don't have enough mana to cast all your spells in one turn, emptying your hand. You may not even be able to cast more than one spell per turn. You'll certainly be able to cast one each turn, though.

Getting more mana sources into play is still helpful at this point, since it may give you the option of casting more of your spells in the same turn or make spells like Fireball more powerful, but it's not nearly as high-priority as it was in the early game. Drawing extra cards starts to be much more useful—you should have enough room left in your hand by now that you

won't be forced to discard them—and you're probably playing cards a little faster than you draw them, if you don't use any card-drawing effects.

This is the part of the game when strategy in choosing spells becomes most important. You're now able to pick what to cast on the basis of “which spell will do me the most good?” rather than “which spell do I have enough mana for?” Also, you may have cards in play by now that require further decisions.

For example, you may need to choose between casting a spell versus leaving the mana available to power a creature's special ability or activate a Circle of Protection during your opponent's turn.

In the mid-game, you'll be using up cards faster than you draw them. This process will bring you into the late game.

Figure 4.3. A typical mid-game position. It's the beginning of the main phase of your fourth turn. Once you play the Forest, you can cast anything except your Craw Wurm.

Late Game: Card-bound

Eventually—unless someone wins before then—you'll reach a point in the duel where you've played everything you want to from your hand. Your hand may or may not be empty, but any cards left in your hand are there because you deliberately decided not to use them yet, not because you needed the mana for other things. Now you've reached the late game.

In the late game, you have plenty of mana for anything you might want to do. Your only limitation now is the number of cards you can draw. Additional mana is almost useless to you now, but anything that can give you extra cards is priceless (figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4. The *Jayemdae Tome* is a late-game card. Spells like this one are worth their weight in gold when you have mana to burn and not much to spend it on.



Figure 4.5. Spells like these allow you to mess with your opponent's mana supply...



lots of mana. Some spells, though, are designed to disrupt this progression, and some decks use this disruption as one of their main tactics.

Magic has a plentiful supply of spells which can be used to destroy or disable one of an

In the late game, you generally have fewer choices than in the mid-game. Anything left in your hand is there for a reason — you've already decided more or less what you're waiting for before you'll use it. Each turn you'll draw one new card, and have a choice as to whether to use it now or save it for later. Other than that, your only choices are what to do with the cards you already have in play from earlier turns. Because of this lack of choices, there's not as much to say about late-game strategy — it mostly hinges on pressing whatever advantage you've already achieved, or on maintaining the status quo until you draw the card that will let you win, depending on your deck type.

opponent's lands, or at least make it painful to use. Many of them are now out of print, but *Fifth Edition* still contains its share (figure 4.5). A few cards even let you take control of your opponent's land (figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. ...and these ones actually let you take your opponent's lands and use them yourself.

Mangling the Stages

In a typical duel, both players will progress smoothly through the stages, from the early mana-bound stage up to the late card-bound with



By using a deck with lots of land destruction or land-stealing spells, you can often progress normally through the game stages while keeping your opponent stuck in the mana-bound early or mid-game stage. Strategies based on this sort of mana-deprivation are very effective—not to mention extremely frustrating for your opponent—when you're playing against a deck with a fairly high mana threshold.

LAND DESTRUCTION TIP

If you're using land destruction/theft against an opponent who's playing with more than one color, concentrate on destroying/stealing all his lands that produce one of the colors instead of targeting all his colors equally. If you can deny him one color, you'll make a significant number of his spells uncastable.



Figure 4.7. Two spells provide mass land destruction — or mass destruction, period, in the case of Jokulhaups.

Jokulhaups is almost a “start the game over” effect, since it blows away everything except enchantments. Since it costs six mana, both players will generally be well into the late-game stage by the time you can cast it. If you have prepared for the Jokulhaups by keeping some appropriate land and spells in your hand, you can recover fairly smoothly from this catastrophe. If your opponent hasn't anticipated your play and kept land and spells in reserve, he will most likely be left floundering for quite a few turns until he builds up enough mana to get his deck operating again, hopefully long enough for you to finish him off. Jokulhaups is also good for a desperation play — if your opponent is in a winning position, you can cast it even if you

haven't set your hand up for it yet. Whoever gets the best draws right after the Jokulhaups will generally win in this case, but a random chance at winning is better than a definite loss.

Armageddon is much more controlled in its effects, destroying only lands. Decks which use Armageddon often include a fair number of non-land mana sources, allowing a quick and easy recovery after the land is

Be Prepared!

If you suspect that your opponent might have Armageddon or Jokulhaups in his deck—and you should suspect it of any deck using white or red that you haven't seen in action—you should plan for that possibility. If you have counterspells, keeping one ready once your opponent gets within one mana of the amount needed for the reset button will usually let you prevent these global cataclysms. If you don't have counterspells you should play your lands fairly conservatively, trying to keep enough in your hand so that you'll be able to recover if your opponent casts one. In the case of Jokulhaups, you'll usually also want to avoid putting too many creatures or artifacts into play at the same time.

destroyed. You can also prepare for it much as you would for Jokulhaups, keeping several lands in your hand. Since Armageddon doesn't destroy creatures or artifacts, though, you can do a number of tricks with it that don't work with Jokulhaups. One very popular technique is to get a large creature out quickly by using a combination of land and non-land mana, then cast Armageddon, leaving your opponent with no mana to bring out any defenses against your large creature for several turns. Armageddon is also popular in weenie decks — if weenie deck-players get enough mana to cast it, they'll often do so with the greatest of glee even without any extra lands in hand, since they only need to draw one or two lands to make a full recovery.

Choices: The Little Things That Add Up

Now that we've covered the general stages of the duel, it's time to talk about strategic choices that you'll face in each of these stages. Most of the tips we'll give here may seem like niggling little nit-picks. In any given duel, nine times out of ten following a particular tip won't make any difference at all.

However, in that tenth time, it may save you a turn or a card or cost your opponent one. These small advantages, added up over multiple duels, make the difference between a poor player and a good one.

Mulligans

Starting a duel with no land almost guarantees a loss. Not only that, but the duel won't be much fun for either player. Because of this, many players use an optional rule called the "Mulligan." This allows a player whose first seven cards have no land (or nothing except land), to show the hand to the opponent, then to reshuffle and draw a new hand. If someone calls a mulligan, the other player also gets the option to reshuffle no matter what was in his hand. The player who's going first has to say whether he's calling a mulligan first. If he doesn't, then the other player can call one.

Each player gets only one chance to call a mulligan. If you draw another mulligan hand after reshuffling, it's just tough luck. However, if you reshuffle when your opponent calls a mulligan, and THEN you draw a mulligan hand, you can call one yourself. In that case, your opponent also gets the option to reshuffle again.

It's almost always good strategy to call a mulligan when you have the chance to. The only time you wouldn't call a no-land mulligan is when playing with out-of-print cards, if you drew enough zero-cost mana sources to get by with, and you were happy with the rest of your land. All-land mulligans are a little more questionable. If your deck has a high mana threshold, and you think you're facing a slow deck or a land-destruction deck, you might decide to keep the all-land hand.

If your opponent calls a mulligan, you need to decide whether to reshuffle yourself. If your hand is average or better, you should keep it, and if it's bad, you should throw it away. If you've already called a mulligan yourself, though, then you should keep even a below-average hand, and only reshuffle on a really bad draw, since you could end up with another mulligan hand.

New Mulligans

Another version of the Mulligan rule, which was introduced in early 1997, allows both players to take as many mulligan reshuffles as they wish. What's the catch? Each time you reshuffle, you draw one less card. This version may eventually become part of the standard rules.

If you get a horrid starting hand with this type of mulligans, taking one reshuffle is worth it. Taking a second is pushing the odds — starting with only five cards in your hand is a very steep penalty. And it's hard to imagine a case where it would be wise go any further down than that.



Figure 4.8. If you played a Plains the first turn, then after playing another land on the second turn you could cast any of the spells on the left, but not the spell on the right.

Which Land Should I Play?

On your first turn, you have nothing in play and seven or eight cards in your hand. Hopefully, several of them are lands. If all the lands in your hand are the same type, you have no choices to make, just play one. Unless you're playing a one-color deck, though, you'll usually have more than one land type to choose from. Choosing the right or wrong land to play can get the whole duel off to a good or bad start.

If you can play something that lets you summon a creature this turn, that will almost always be your best move. Otherwise, you need to figure out what will give you the best chance of casting something next turn, or the turn after. Sometimes you'll have a two- or three-cost spell in your hand, so you know exactly what you need to cast it. Other times you'll be hoping to draw one, and trying to guess what type of land you'll need to play now to have the best chance of casting whatever you draw. To do this, you need to

remember what spells are in your deck.

For example, say you have four lands in your starting hand: two Plains and two Forests. If you play a Plains this turn, then next turn you'll be able to play another land and cast anything that costs 1, 2, *, ♣, 1*, 1♣, or **, but not ♣♣ (Figure 4.8). If you play a Forest this turn, on the other hand, you'll have the ♣♣ option next turn but not the **. If you know that you have ** spells in your deck, like *White Knight* or *Order of the White Shield*, you should play the Plains — if you know you have ♣♣ spells like *Whirling Dervish*, you should play the Forest. If you have both, you should play the right land for whichever you have more of. If you have equal numbers, decide which spell would do you the most good, and play as if you're going to draw that spell.

The same kind of logic applies to choices in later turns. For example, say you had a *Benalish Hero*—costing *—in your hand, so you played a Plains the first turn. Now you're on the second

turn. You didn't draw anything that needs green or that needs **, but you know that you have some ♣♣ or 1 ♣♣ spells in your deck. So you'll play a Forest this time, to maximize your chance of being able to cast something next turn.

Finally—as you may remember from the section on reset buttons—if your opponent has white or red mana you should watch out for the possibility of an Armageddon or Jokulhaups. Once you get enough land in play to cast most or all the spells in your deck, stop playing land. That way,

FIGHTING LAND DESTRUCTION

One other land-playing strategy is important if you're facing an opponent who's using land-destruction spells — and if you don't know whether someone has land destruction, it's safest to assume that they do. If you don't need the colored mana immediately and you have a lot of one type of land, and less of another, play the type that you have more of first. This makes it harder for your opponent's land destruction to cripple you. Remember, you can always get mana from a land right after you play it, before your opponent can do anything to blow it up, so if you play a land the turn that you need that color of mana, you'll be able to get at least one spell off.

if your opponent does cast a spell to destroy all the land, you'll be able to recover quickly. New players often overlook one other reason to keep land in your hand: bluffing. As long as you have a card—any card—in your hand, your opponent will be a little more cautious. After all, he doesn't know what that card might be! If you empty your hand, though, then he knows that you can't pull out any surprises, so he can safely go ahead with his own plans.

Which Spell Should I Cast?

In the early and mid-game, you'll often have two or more spells in your hand and enough mana to cast any of them, but not enough to cast all of them in the same turn. Choosing which spell(s) to cast in this situation—or, in some cases, choosing not to cast any—is one of the most critical skills for a Magic player. Which choice is best depends on many, many factors, including the style of decks you and your opponent are playing, the stage of the duel, and the cards each of you have already played. Trying to explore all the possibilities and permutations would be beyond the scope of this book. We can, however, give you some general tips that apply to almost all decks, and a few bits of advice for common situations.

First we'll deal with the cases where you want to cast something, and just need to decide what. Later in the chapter we'll discuss when to cast spells, including cases when it's better to hold onto your spells instead of casting them. Every time you're choosing which spell to cast, you should keep three goals in mind:

Increase my options.

Hurt my opponent.

Defend myself.

The importance of hurting your opponent as opposed to defending yourself, varies depending on the type of deck you're playing and the current game situation. Also, these two goals can overlap, since hurting your opponent doesn't just mean damage — it also includes things like killing his creatures and destroying his land. Even if you're playing a reactive deck, you'll still make a lot of plays that hurt your opponent. However, no matter what type of deck you're playing, the most important goal is usually increasing your options.

In the early game, this means that spells which create new mana sources are very high priority, since they'll allow you many more options as to what to cast next turn. For example,

if you have a choice between summoning Birds of Paradise or a fighting creature, the Birds will almost always be the better play. In the mid-game, mana is less of a priority and you may be better off summoning something that can deal damage. Anything that can give you extra cards starts to climb in priority as your hand gets emptier, since more cards in your hand gives you more choices. Also, cards which can be used more than one way are more useful than cards with only one function. For example, Pradesh Gypsies or Wyluli Wolf (Figure 4.9) are better than a 1/1 creature with no special abilities, since you can use them either for a special effect or to attack or block with. Their casting costs reflect this extra usefulness.

Figure 4.9. Creatures with many uses are much better than those with fewer uses. Unfortunately, they usually cost more to cast, too.



Optimizing your mana use is another way to increase your options. Say you have four mana available and you're trying to choose between two spells, both of which do you about the same amount of immediate good. One costs three mana and the other costs four. All else being

equal, you should cast the four-cost spell (Figure 4.10). That way, you can cast the cheaper spell next turn, and have one more mana available for something else such as the one-cost spell that you might draw. If you cast the three-cost spell this turn, and then drew a one-cost spell, you could only cast one spell next turn. Also, casting the more expensive spell first gives you a bit of protection against land destruction. If you cast the three-cost spell first, and your opponent destroys one of your lands, you won't be able to cast the four-cost spell until you draw another land.

When Should I Do It?

Just as important as deciding what land to play, or what spell to cast, is deciding when to do it. Beginning players tend to play in a fixed sequence — each turn they play a land if they have one, then cast as many spells as their mana allows, then attack, then pass the turn to their opponent. By fol-

Figure 4.10. If your opponent has no creatures and no forests, summoning either of these creatures will do you about the same amount of good. With four mana available, cast the Spider.



lowing this sequence, they miss some opportunities for better plays.

For this section, we'll divide all Magic cards into two types. Most cards can only be played during your main phase, either before or after your attack. Lands, sorceries, summons, enchant-

ments, and artifacts all fall into this category. We'll discuss them first. Afterwards, we'll cover fast effects.

If you're going to play a land, it's usually best to do that as the first step in your main phase. Most other main-phase actions, though, should be postponed until after your attack. This serves two purposes — it keeps your options open, and it leaves your opponent guessing about what you're going to do and what tricks you may have up your sleeve.

For example, if you've just spent all your mana summoning a large creature, and then you attack with a puny 1/1, your opponent won't be worried. He knows

that you're only doing 1 damage, he can save his spells or his speed bumps for the big creature. But if you attack first, with all your land untapped, your opponent doesn't know what's coming. You might have a fast effect such as Howl from Beyond to make the little creature dangerous.

Maybe he'll block it and trade creatures with you, just to be on the safe side. Or maybe he'll even cast a spell to kill it, and curse himself when he sees the big creature pop up a moment later.

The only spells you should cast before attacking are those which will make a difference in the attack. These include such things as enchantments which make one or more of your creatures bigger, artifacts which provide effects that you want to use during combat, and spells which destroy or disable enemy creatures which might otherwise have blocked your attack. Creature spells should almost always wait. However, a few creatures have special abilities that will boost your other creatures, and a few other creatures grow based on what creatures you have in play (Figure 4.11). In those cases, a summon spell can fall into the "make a difference in the attack" category, and you'll want to cast it first.



Figure 4.11. If you're going to be attacking with one of these, summon other creatures to make it bigger before your attack.

Holding Cards

Just because you can cast a spell, doesn't always mean that you should. Deciding when to hold onto cards is a critical skill for a **Magic** player. This is especially important for fast effects, which we'll discuss next, but can also apply to land and to main-phase spells.

We already mentioned the usefulness of keeping some lands in your hand, if you suspect that your opponent might cast Armageddon or Jokulhaups. The same idea applies to creatures if your opponent is using mass-destruction or mass-damage spells. The big advantage of these spells to a creatureless or creature-poor deck is that they allow their caster to destroy several creatures at once, with no penalty. You can blunt this advantage by playing your creatures sparingly. Put only one or two out at once,

and keep attacking with them. By nibbling away at your opponent's life this way, you'll eventually force him to use his mass kills on only one or two creatures. And since you kept creatures in your hand, as soon as he does, you'll summon a replacement.

Some spells become more effective the longer you wait to cast them. The "X spells" (Figure 4.12) are obvious examples of this — the more land you have in play, the bigger you'll be able to make the X. Some spells base their power on the contents of the players' graveyards, which makes them much more useful late in the game when the graveyards are full. The Lhurgoyf (Figure 4.13) is an obvious example of this. If you summon a Lhurgoyf as soon as you have enough mana available, it will be small, harmless or close to it. But late in a duel, after a lot of creatures have been killed, a Lhurgoyf will be highly dangerous. It's less obvious that the same is true for spells like Animate Dead and Recall, which retrieve cards from the graveyard. The more cards you have to choose from, the more powerful these spells can be. When using any spells like these, think carefully before casting them. It may be better tactics to hold onto the spell and cast it later.



Figure 4.12. Spells like these, which have an "X" in the casting cost, become more powerful the later in the game you wait to cast them.

Mass destruction spells are another category which you'll want to think carefully about when to cast. Holding onto the spell and waiting to cast it will often let you blow up more of your opponent's cards, and will also give you more time to build up cards in your hand for recovery after-



Figure 4.13. A mere baby if cast early in a duel, but later on, when the graveyards are full, the Lhurgoyf can be immense.

wards. A canny opponent, though, will recognize this possibility and may stockpile cards himself. Also, the longer you wait, the longer he has to damage you with whatever cards he's already played. So you need to wait long enough, but not too long.

Fast Effects

Unlike the main-phase spells, you can cast fast effect spells (and use fast effect abilities) at almost any time. In particular, you can cast them during your opponent's turn, and even in response to your opponent casting a spell. You can also cast them during your opponent's discard phase, after it's too late for him to cast any main-phase spells.

The key to getting the best use from fast effects, in most cases, is to postpone casting them until they'll create the most impact. Chapter 3 already demonstrated this principle in some of its examples of using

damage or removal effects in combination with an attack to kill several creatures for the price of one.

Any fast effect that you're thinking of using during a duel will fall into one of three categories, based on when and how you would use

it. The same card might fit into all three categories at different times during a duel, depending on your situation.

Basic. This category covers effects that need to be used at a specific time, such as upkeep. It also includes any fast effects that you need to use during your own turn for some particular reason — for example, to enhance one of your creatures or disable/destroy one of your opponent’s potential blockers before your attack.

Responsive. All interrupts fall into this category. So do effects that you’d use during your attack after you see how your opponent blocks or during your opponent’s attack, damage-prevention, regeneration, or anything you’d use in response to your opponent’s effects. These effects are time-critical. For them to do any good, you need to keep enough mana in reserve to be able to use the effect when the right situation occurs.

Optional. These effects are things you’d like to do, but only if you don’t need the mana for something else. These are usually effects from cards in play rather than spells. The most commonly-used *Fifth Edition* effects in this category are those that let you draw cards or gain life (Figure 4.14). Effects from this category should be postponed until your opponent’s discard phase, right before he ends his turn. If nothing else has happened by then that required you to use your mana for a responsive effect, you can then do the optional effect.

When you’re very short on mana, you’ll occasionally use a spell that would normally fall into one of the other categories as an “optional” spell. For example, early in a game you might Incinerate or Boomerang (Figure 4.15) an opponent’s creature at the end of his turn, if it doesn’t look like you’ll have the free mana to cast your spell as a response for a few turns. Notice that even in this case you did postpone the spell. You could have just cast it during your own turn, or



Figure 4.14. These sorts of effects are most often used at the end of an opponent’s turn.

earlier in your opponent’s turn. By waiting until the end of your opponent’s turn, though, you gave him as much chance as possible to waste a spell beefing up the doomed creature.



Figure 4.15. For best effect, you’d wait to use these sorts of spells until the target creature is actually threatening you. But when you’re short on mana, you may decide to just do it at the end of your opponent’s turn.

Adapting To Your Opponent's Deck

One of the most important aspects of **Magic** strategy is also the hardest to teach — figuring out how your opponent's deck is designed to work and adapting your own play to interfere with it as much as possible. We touched on this a bit when talking about holding onto cards if you think your opponent might be using mass destruction. That's only one of thousands of possible examples. Most, though, are very specific, applying to individual cards and combinations. Here are a few other general ones.

Creature Trade-offs

When playing a creature-based deck against an opponent with fewer creatures, any one-for-one trade of fairly equal creatures is to your benefit. Twenty creatures in a deck versus fifteen may only make a difference of two or three actually drawn in the course of a game; every time you make an even trade, you'll increase your creature advantage. Given the chance, you should always block when it will give you such a trade, and attack when your opponent's only possible blocks will be trades. If you're on the other side of this inequity and your opponent is the one with more creatures, though, you'll want to be more conservative. You have more non-creature spells — use them to gain the advantage. Don't attack when it will allow your opponent to make an even trade, and try to avoid blocking for trades when you can help it.

Land Order

When playing a multi-colored deck against land destruction, your opponent will often try to keep you from getting one particular color of mana. Sometimes playing your lands in a different order than you normally would can help against this tactic. If you don't need the colored mana immediately, play more lands of the same color(s) that are already in play instead of putting down your other color. That way, he'll have to choose between letting you build up a mana supply or saving his initial land-destruction spells for your other color.

Preventing Locks

When playing against a lock deck, you'll win if you can prevent the lock. With an active deck, you'll usually have no chance of stopping the combination. You need to pour on the speed, throwing caution to the winds, and simply win before your opponent can get the cards needed. With a reactive deck, you'll usually have spells that can break or prevent the lock. Guard them jealously; don't let yourself be tempted to use them for anything less critical.

Figuring Out Your Opponent's Deck

In order to adapt your play to work best against your opponent's deck and strategy, you need to know what you're up against. If you're playing a

friend, you may already be familiar with his deck — you may even have built your decks together. Even if he has a new deck you've never seen, you may have a fair idea of the general style of decks he usually plays.

When you first begin a duel against a new opponent, though, you know nothing about what type of deck you're facing. With each card that you see played, you learn a little more. If the first land is a Forest, for example, you can expect creatures and probably a fairly fast deck. If the first land is an Island, on the other hand, you'll want to prepare yourself for counter-spells. As the duel continues, you'll see more of your opponent's cards, and be able to add to or modify your original guesses.

Good **Magic** players are familiar with all the popular deck styles, and many not-so-popular ones. There's no substitute for experience. To really have a feel for a type of deck, you need to build one and play with it. When you've played a deck enough to become comfortable with it, you'll know not only how the deck works, but also what will interfere with it the most. Next time you come up against a deck of that type, you'll be able to adapt your own strategies to take advantage of whatever the deck's weaknesses are.

PROXIES

Want to practice with a deck, but don't have all the cards you need to build it? Use proxies. Just take some spare lands and write the names of the cards on them. You can't use proxies in tournaments, and many players won't play against them in a "serious" game, but if you say you just want to try out a deck idea you should have no trouble finding someone to practice with. You can also practice against your own decks, playing both sides.

In the next chapter, we'll go over some of the major deck styles. For each one, we'll talk about the types of cards you'd use to build the deck, and the strategies for playing it and for playing against it.

The number of different possible **Magic** decks is infinite. Even if you limit yourself to decks small enough to shuffle and containing a reasonable mixture of land and spells, with matching colors, the number of possible legal decks is still too large to compute. Most decks that are actually played, though, fall into certain broad groupings. At one extreme are the “kitchen sink” decks, which contain a mish-mash of spells with no particular theme. At the other end of the spectrum come very specialized decks, centering around one card’s unique abilities, such as Titania’s Song decks, Stasis decks, and Zur’s Weirding decks. Most lie somewhere between these extremes, focusing on a specific theme or way of winning.

In this chapter, we’ll explore five of the most common deck themes, discussing useful cards and other design factors for building a deck of that type as well as the strategies for playing it.

The section for each deck type includes a sample deck or two. Note, though, that these samples are NOT optimized. Our purpose here is not to be a “cookbook” of deck recipes — instead, we want to give you a hand up in designing your own decks. After reading each section and experimenting for a while, you should be able to build a deck that works better than the sample.

DECK THEMES

THE WEENIE DECK

“Weenie” is a **Magic** slang term for a small creature, usually costing one or two mana. A weenie deck is a deck built mostly from weenies. The usual strategy of a weenie deck is to quickly swarm the opponent, dealing lots of fast damage before a slower deck can do much of anything about it. Weenie decks are easy to build and play, and they are surprisingly effective against a wide variety of deck types.

Building the Deck

Weenie decks can be built using any color, though blue has the hardest time of it. To achieve its fast swarm effect, a weenie deck needs to be able to cast all—or nearly all—its creatures with just one or two land, so weenie decks are almost always single-color. Using two colors risks mana problems, and one of the big advantages a weenie deck has is that it’s almost immune to mana problems. It’s not uncommon, though, to add a splash of blue for Sleight of Mind (Figure 5.1) to a black or white weenie deck, since it’s so handy to be able to tune the Knight’s protection to match the opponent’s main color.



Figure 5.1. Some weenie decks add a splash of blue so they can cast *Sleight of Mind* on their Knights.

Because they're single-color and all their spells are cheap to cast, weenie decks don't need as high a mana percentage as most deck types. 20 lands in a 60 card weenie deck is plenty, and some use as few as 15. Less than that can work, but it gets very risky.

Once you've chosen a color, you need some weenies. A 60 card weenie deck should include at least 20 creatures, and often more. Table 5.1 lists your choices in *Fifth Edition*, going just by casting costs, and not including 0-power creatures. As you can see, every color except blue has plenty of choices. Some of these creatures, obviously, are more suitable than others.

WHITE	BLACK	BLUE	GREEN	RED
Aysen Bureaucrats	Black Knight	Dandân	Elvish Archers	Atog
Benalish Hero	Bog Imp	Lord of Atlantis	Ghazbán Ogre	Dwarven Soldier
Death Speakers	Bog Rats	Magus of the Unseen	Grizzly Bears	Goblin Digging Team
Hipparion	Drudge Skeletons	Merfolk of the Pearl Trident	Llanowar Elves	Ironclaw Orcs
Icatian Scout	Erg Raiders	Sea Sprite	Scavenger Folk	Mons's Goblin Raiders
Mesa Falcon	Initiates of the Ebon Hand	Vodalian Soldiers	Scryb Sprites	Mountain Goat
Mesa Pegasus	Kjeldoran Dead	Zephyr Falcon	Shanodin Dryads	Orcish Captain
Order of the White Shield	Knight of Stromgald		Tarpan	Orcish Conscripts
Pikemen	Nether Shadow		Whirling Dervish	Primordial Ooze
Repentant Blacksmith	Vampire Bats		Wyluli Wolf	
Samite Healer				
Tundra Wolves				
White Knight				

Table 5.1. Weenies in Fifth Edition. There's also one Artifact Creature weenie, the *Battering Ram*.

A pure weenie deck contains only creatures and land. Most, though, include some spells to help the weenies out and/or interfere with your opponent. Power boosters for the weenies fall into two types — single-creature effects and global effects. Every color has at least one creature-boosting enchantment in *Fifth Edition*, but only black, white, and red have global effects: *Bad Moon*, *Crusade*, and *Orcish Oriflamme*, respectively (see Figure 5.3). *Infinite Hourglass* (Figure 5.4) works for any color, and will either boost all the creatures or tie up your opponent's mana supply. *Green's Giant Growth* (Figure 5.5) is excellent in a weenie deck, since it will let a weenie take out a 4/4 opposing creature.

In addition to *Infinite Hourglass*, several other artifacts are quite effective in a weenie deck (see Figure 5.6). *Meekstone* is custom-made for weenie decks. It doesn't affect the weenies, and it cripples larger creatures. Beware of using power-raising enchantments if you have *Meekstones* in your deck, though — you don't want to make your own creatures large enough to be affected by a *Meekstone*! *Winter Orb* can be used to take advantage of the low mana requirements of the weenie deck. You'll hardly even notice the restriction, but any deck with higher-cost spells will have problems.

Howling Mine will help keep you supplied with weenies; an opponent with higher-cost spells will have problems at first casting spells that quickly, so it won't help them as much. In fact, if you combine *Howling Mine* and *Winter Orb*, your opponent will probably end up needing to discard.

Figure 5.7 shows more miscellaneous spells often used by weenie decks. White weenie decks almost always include *Armageddon*. As with the *Winter Orb*, you need so little land to operate that *Armageddon* won't hurt you nearly as much as it hurts your opponent. Black weenie decks frequently use *Necropotence*, since they burn

GOBLIN HORDES

One popular form of the red weenie deck is the "Goblin Horde". If you're building a *Goblin Horde*, you'll almost certainly include two creatures which break the two mana rule: *Goblin King* and *Goblin Hero* (see Figure 5.2). You'll also want the *Goblin Warrens* enchantment, since you can use it along with some summoned Goblins to pump out more and more. We've included a sample *Goblin Horde* deck at the end of this section.



Figure 5.2. These fellows cost three mana, so they don't quite qualify as weenies, but they're worth including in a "Goblin Horde" deck.



Figure 5.3. These global creature-boosting enchantments are a key part of many weenie decks.

through the cards so rapidly. Red weenie decks often throw in a few direct damage spells, especially *Incinerate*. Also, they sometimes include *Manabarbs* — this works well for the same reasons that *Winter Orb* and *Armageddon* do.

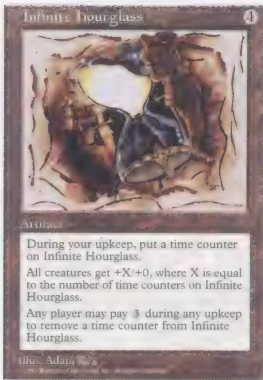


Figure 5.4. (far left) Weenie decks love this card, since they'll always have more creatures to benefit from it.



Figure 5.6. Some of the best artifacts for use in weenie decks.



Figure 5.7. Some other spells often found in weenie decks.

Playing Strategy

A weenie deck is all about speed. As a general rule, if you're going to win, you'll win fast; if the game goes on for very long, you're in trouble. In Chapters 3 and 4, we emphasized holding onto spells as an important part of strategy. With a weenie deck, you can pretty much forget that rule. Hold nothing back — just get as many

creatures into play as you can, as quickly as possible, and attack, attack, attack! If your opponent can't get any defenses out to stop you, and you got a decent draw, you should be able to deal 20 damage (or at least close to it) by the fifth turn. Of course, most opponents won't just sit there and let you roll over them, but that's the way you should try to play the deck.

Figure 5.8. Mass damage and mass destruction are the bane of weenie decks.

Sample Deck One:

Chivalry meets Bureaucracy

- 4 Armageddon
- 4 Aysen Bureaucrats
- 4 Benalish Hero
- 4 Crusade
- 2 Dingus Egg
- 2 Mesa Falcon
- 4 Mesa Pegasus
- 4 Order of the White Shield
- 4 Spirit Link
- 4 Tundra Wolves
- 4 White Knight
- 20 Plains

Sample Deck Two:

Goblins and Orcs Unite!

- 4 Goblin Digging Team
- 4 Goblin Hero
- 4 Goblin King
- 4 Orcish Oriflamme
- 4 Goblin Warrens
- 4 Incinerate
- 4 Ironclaw Orcs
- 4 Mons's Goblin Raiders
- 4 Orcish Conscripts
- 4 Orcish Captain
- 20 Mountains



The exception to this strategy comes when facing an opponent with mass damage or mass destruction (Figure 5.8). If you empty your hand for a swarm attack, and your opponent wipes out your entire horde with a single Earthquake or Wrath of God, or a 1-point Pestilence activation, you'll be in deep trouble. You'll be in end-game mode, reduced to playing the one weenie you draw each turn (minus the turns that you draw land or other spells), while your opponent will just be coming into his full mid-game stride.

To avoid this possibility, if you think your opponent has mass destruction, you'll want to play a bit more conservatively. Instead of a swarm attack, present your opponent with one threat at a time. As soon as he eliminates that threat, put out another one. This way, your opponent's mass destruction spells become just overpriced single-creature destruction.

THE BIG CREATURE DECK

Going just by the name, you'd think a "big creature deck" would be the same as a weenie deck with expensive creatures substituted for the cheap ones. If you try building a deck like that, though, you'll quickly see that it doesn't work. Against most decks, the duel would be over before you even managed to put enough land into play to summon any of your creatures. A big creature deck relies on big creatures for most or all of its damage, but they don't make up the majority of the cards in the deck. This makes sense, if you think about it. With weenie creatures, you need a lot of them to finish your opponent off in any reasonable length of time. With big creatures, all it takes is one. A "big creature," by the way, is usually defined as a non-wall creature with power/toughness adding up to 8 or more. Big creatures cost at least five mana to summon unless they have some sort of built-in disadvantage, so they take a while to bring out.

Big creature decks tend to fall into three categories. What you'll put in the deck depend on which of these three strategies you want to use, so for this deck theme, we'll describe the playing strategies first and then follow that with deck building, instead of the other way around.

Playing Strategy

One approach to this kind of deck uses a very active strategy, getting a big creature out as soon as it can and destroying anything the opponent tries to

Green	Blue	White
Craw Giant	6/4	Air Elemental 4/4 Akron Legionaire 8/4
Craw Wurm	6/4	Leviathan 10/10 Personal Incarnation 6/6
Durkwood Boars	4/4	Sea Serpent 5/5 Seraph 4/4
Force of Nature	8/8	Sibilant Spirit 5/6
Hungry Mist	6/2	Artifact
Ironroot Treefolk	3/5	Black Clockwork Beast */4
Johtull Wurm	6/6	Derelor 4/4 Colossus of Sardia 9/9
Scaled Wurm	7/6	Evil Eye of Orms-By-Gore 3/6 Diabolic Machine 4/4
		Lord of the Pit 7/7 Urza's Avenger 4/4
Red		Nightmare */*
Orgg	6/6	
Shivan Dragon	5/5	

Table 5.2. The big creatures of Fifth Edition.

throw in the way. With a deck of this sort, your first objective is to build up your mana supply as fast as possible by casting spells which give you additional mana sources. If your opponent has a fast deck, he'll be attacking you while you're building. Use your support spells to fend off the worst threats, and simply grin and bear it for the others. As soon as you're able, summon a big creature and start attacking. If you can bring one out more quickly by using a temporary mana surge like Dark Ritual, even better. If your opponent manages to kill the first creature off, summon another one. In most cases, you should avoid putting more than one creature into play at once, and use your support spells to get rid of anything that can stop it from dealing damage. Against some types of defenses, though, you'll need more than one creature. This style of deck often includes Armageddon in order to blow away all the lands after putting out a big creature, making it hard for the opponent to do anything to protect himself.

Another sort of big creature deck begins with a much more reactive strategy, sitting back and destroying or countering anything dangerous that the opponent plays while building up resources. For this strategy, you have to judge carefully which of your opponent's spells and permanents are OK to leave alone, and which need to be countered or destroyed. Once you feel secure, summon a big creature and use all your resources to protect it long enough to pummel the opponent.

A third approach isn't so much a "big creature" deck as an "all-size creature" deck. It's sort of a crossbreed between big creatures and weenies, containing a mixture of creature sizes. The strategy of this type is to summon something every turn, starting with small creatures and proceeding to larger ones as your mana supply grows, and attack constantly.

Building the Deck

Big creatures are a green specialty. Big creature decks can be built from other colors, but as you can see from Table 5.2, which lists all the creatures in *Fifth Edition* with power/toughness adding up to at least 8, your choices are much more limited in any color but green. Also, extra mana is almost essential for a big creature deck, and that's another area in which green excels.

Unlike weenie decks, though, big creature decks are frequently two-colored or

even three-colored. The other colors provide support spells, helping the big creature player until a big creature comes out, or keeping the big creature alive and attacking once it's in play.

Big creatures are expensive to cast, so a big creature deck needs a lot of mana. You'll probably want 25 or more lands for a 60 card deck. Consider making some of your lands storage lands, such as those shown in Figure 5.9. You can leave these tapped for several turns to build up counters, then untap them when you have enough to summon a big creature.

It helps to have some non-land mana sources, too; Figure 5.10 shows some of the possibilities. If you're using green, add mana-producing Elves, Birds of Paradise, Untamed Wilds, or Nature's Lore to help you get enough mana for your large creature quickly. If you're using black, Dark Rituals are a must. Blue can use Drain Power to borrow some of your opponent's mana. Fellwar Stones and Mana Vaults work for any color.

How many big creatures you should include varies with the type of big creature deck you're trying to build. For the active version, you'll typically use eight to twelve in a 60 card deck, to make sure you draw at least one by the time you have enough mana to cast it and that you have replacements if the first ones are killed. The reactive version doesn't need as many, since it will be summoning them later and protecting them better — four to eight is typical. The "all-size creature" deck uses an assortment of creatures of various costs, typically on a scale like:

One mana	8	Four mana	4
Two mana	6	Five+ mana	4
Three mana	4		

The rest of the deck consists of support cards. Most of these will be spells to destroy or disable your opponent's permanents, or counterspells if you're using blue. Anything that destroys a target creature, enchantment, or artifact may be useful. As mentioned before, Armageddon is often included in the active versions. For both active and passive



Figure 5.9. Storage lands let you build up counters over several turns, then tap them for a surge of mana. Each color has one.



Figure 5.10. Some non-land mana sources.

versions, if you're not relying on Elves and Birds as mana sources, Wrath of God (figure 5.11) is another good choice, since you can use it to clear away all your opponent's creatures before you do your own summoning.

Sample Deck: *The Wurm Turns*

- 4 *Armageddon*
- 4 *Birds of Paradise*
- 3 *Craw Wurm*
- 2 *Disenchant*
- 2 *Fellwar Stone*
- 3 *Joktull Wurm*
- 4 *Llanowar Elves*
- 2 *Mana Vault*
- 3 *Scaled Wurm*
- 3 *Spirit Link*
- 2 *Stampede*
- 2 *Winter Blast*
- 4 *Brushland*
- 2 *Hollow Trees*
- 6 *Plains*
- 14 *Forest*



Figure 5.11. *Wrath of God* can be used to clear the board of creatures before bringing out a big one.

You'll certainly want *Incinerate*, *Disintegrate*, and *Fireball* (Figure 5.12). *Incinerate* gives you the best damage ratio, while the two "X" spells can deal massive damage late in the game; all three can be aimed at either your opponent or his creatures, whichever you need more at the time. *Fireball* has the additional advantage of allowing you to split the damage between multiple targets.

<i>Detonate</i>	<i>Fireball</i>	<i>Pyrotechnics</i>
<i>Disintegrate</i>	<i>Flare</i>	<i>Word of Blasting</i>
<i>Dwarven Catapult</i>	<i>Incinerate</i>	
<i>Earthquake</i>	<i>Inferno</i>	

Table 5.3. Burn spells.

THE BURN DECK

The most common way of dealing damage in **Magic** is by attacking with creatures. Another method is available though, spells and effects which directly damage your opponent or your opponent's creatures. These spells are almost all red. Many have names or artwork with a "fire" theme, so a deck which focuses on those spells is called a "burn deck."

Building the Deck

If you're not following the tournament deck-building restrictions that limit you to just four of any one spell, building a burn deck is easy. Just take 20 to 24 Mountains (perhaps substituting *Dwarven Holds* for a few of them) and add enough of your favorite direct-damage spells to fill the deck up to 60. The restriction on duplicate cards makes things a bit trickier. You won't be able to fill the whole deck with the most efficient spells—you'll have to pick from the less effective ones. Table 5.3 lists the burn spells available in *Fifth Edition*. If you have access to cards from expansion sets, you'll have even more burn spells to choose from.



Figure 5.12. Favorite burn spells.



Flare and Pyrotechnics (Figure 5.13) are less certain. Flare costs more than Incinerate and does less damage, but since it gives you an extra draw, it's usually worth the cost — especially if your opponent is using the 2/1 pumpable Knight cards. Pyrotechnics gives the flexibility of a Fireball without the extra splitting cost, making it the most efficient spell if you have exactly five mana available; however, this is balanced by its inflexibility.

Then come the mass-damage spells: Earthquake, Inferno, and Dwarven Catapult (Figure 5.14). Many players shy away from spells which damage their caster, but the ability to wipe out several creatures at once is worth it. Also, the player of a burn deck will usually be ahead in life against many types of decks. When that's the case, damaging both players equally brings you closer to victory. Dwarven Catapult is a hard call; it's excellent if your opponent has the proper mix of creatures, but useless against a creatureless deck and almost useless against a fast swarm, since the damage must be divided equally among all the creatures.


 **Another advantage of the mass-damage spells is that they can kill creatures which can't be targeted by spells or effects. No such creatures exist in Fifth Edition, but a number of them have appeared in various expansions. Figure 5.15 shows some of these.**



Figure 5.13. These burn spells aren't as favored, but they're still good in the right circumstances.



Figure 5.14. Mass damage.



Figure 5.15. Creatures like these can't be targeted, but can still be killed by mass-damage spells.

Finally, we have Detonate and Word of Blasting (figure 5.16). Each of these blows away a particular type of target and deals damage to your opponent in the bargain. If you think your



Figure 5.16. These specialized burn spells blow something up and damage your opponent as well.



Figure 5.17. These artifacts produce effects like the burn spells.



Figure 5.18. Even though it's a creature, Ball Lightning is very appropriate in a burn deck.

Figure 5.19. Most burn decks include one or both of these reset buttons.

opponent will play the right type of target for you to use them on, they're excellent, but if he doesn't, they're wasted cards.

Three artifacts—Aladdin's Ring, Rod of Ruin, and Time Bomb (Figure 5.17)—produce effects similar to the burn spells, and might fit well into the deck. Also, though a pure burn deck is creatureless, many players will include some “attack on turn summoned” red creatures, especially Ball Lightning (Figure 5.18). You can think of this almost as a direct damage spell, since it's a “use once and throw away” effect. Some burn decks also depart from the creatureless model by

throwing in some Walls of Stone. This giant wall can hold off all but the biggest creature, and is tough enough that it won't fall victim to your own mass damage spells, even Inferno.

It's always good to have a “reset button” (Figure 5.19) in case your opponent starts running away with the game. Red has the biggest reset button of all, Jokulhaups — this makes a good addition to the deck. It does, however, have two disadvantages: it wipes out land, leaving you unable to cast any more big blast spells for quite a while, and it won't get rid of a Circle of Protection: Red or a Justice. These enchantments are the bane of burn decks.

Because of this, many burn decks use Nevinyrral's Disk either instead of—or in addition to—Jokulhaups; it destroys only those annoying enchantments and leaves the land alone.

To maximize damage from your burn spells, you need plenty of mana. One way to achieve this is to use a higher mana ratio — but more land means fewer spells, so it's not a good solution. Mana Flare (Figure 5.20) provides another solution, doubling the mana production of all lands. This also helps your opponent, though, so use it with caution. Another option is to use Dwarven

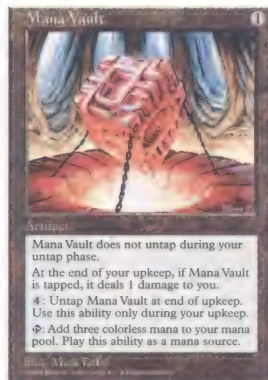


Figure 5.20. Need more mana to power those big blasts? Add Mana Flares or Mana Vaults to the deck.

Holds in place of some Mountains. These allow you to build up potential mana over several turns, then blow it all on one big blast. Mana Vault provides a similar effect, letting you spend mana one turn and pay it back (plus interest) on the next.

Playing Strategy

You can play a burn deck by just blasting away at everything in sight, but if you do, you'll usually lose. With a creature deck, your creatures provide both offense and defense. Since a creature can stick around for many turns, they can fill this double-duty fairly easily. When you're playing a burn deck, your burn spells have to provide both offense and defense, and they don't stick around for more than one turn. Because of this, playing a burn deck successfully requires careful resource management. If you only burn your opponent, his creatures will make mincemeat out of you. A single creature can keep damaging you turn after turn, so you'll run out of life before your opponent does. But if you only burn creatures, you'll

never damage your opponent — so you'll have no chance at all of winning.

From that analysis, it might seem that the burn player has no chance at all. Actually, though, burn decks can be quite successful. Against a slow deck or a creatureless deck, you may be able to simply overwhelm them with damage. Against a creature deck, the key is strategic use of spells which damage everything, or which can be split between multiple targets. Any time you use one of your own cards to destroy two or more of your opponent's cards, it frees up "extra" cards which you can use to damage your opponent.

Most of the skill in playing a burn deck against an opponent with a creature deck lies in knowing when to use your mass damage spells. For example, say your opponent has a 1/1 and a 2/2 creature in play. If you cast a two-point Earthquake, you'll take out both creatures. If you wait a turn, you'll take three damage, but your opponent might summon another creature, allowing you to kill all three with the Earthquake. Of course, a clever opponent will know that you might have that Earthquake in your hand, so he may deliberately avoid summoning more creatures for a while. Each turn you need to evaluate how much damage you can afford to take and how much you could do to your opponent if you switched to an all-out assault, and decide how to best use your spells. Each player will be trying to out-think (or, sometimes, out-bluff) the other.

Sample Deck: Conflagration

3	Ball Lightning
2	Detonate
4	Disintegrate
4	Earthquake
4	Fireball
4	Flare
4	Incinerate
2	Inferno
3	Mana Flare
4	Nevinyrral's Disk
2	Pyrotechnics
20	Mountain
4	Dwarven Hold

THE PERMISSION DECK

A permission deck earns its name by making the opponent ask permission for everything he tries to do. Armed with a bevy of counterspells, the permission mage can stop any spell. Other spells in the deck can destroy, neutralize, or even take control of anything that the permission mage allows to be cast.

Building the Deck

Almost all counterspells are blue, so permission decks are always built around a blue core. Blue has only a few ways to deal with cards once they've made it into play, though, so permission decks are generally two-color, with the second color providing the destruction effects.

Blue/white is the most common, and blue/red the next most. Black and green don't work well for the second color, since black has no way to deal with artifacts or enchantments and green has only the very expensive Desert Twister (Figure 5.21) to remove creatures.

The foundation of a permission deck is a solid core of counterspells. Note the difference between "counterspell" and "Counterspell" — the first is a general term, the second is the name of a specific spell. You might like a solid core of capital-C Counterspells, but if you're following



Figure 5.21. Green doesn't work well as the second color for a permission deck, since its only creature-destruction spell, *Desert Twister*, costs six mana.

lent against a weenie deck, but becomes very costly if your opponent has large spells. *Memory Lapse* takes care of a problem for one turn, but the card will be back again the next turn.



Figure 5.22. Fifth Edition has four general-purpose counterspells.

<i>Counterspell</i>	<i>Memory Lapse</i>	<i>Spell Blast</i>
<i>Force Spike</i>	<i>Power Sink</i>	
<i>Hydroblast</i>	<i>Remove Soul</i>	

Table 5.4. Counterspells.

the usual four-of-a-kind limit, you'll have to use several types of small-c counterspells instead. Table 5.4 lists the blue counterspells available in *Fifth Edition*.

Four of the counterspells, shown in Figure 5.22, are general purpose; the others are more specialized, only useful in certain situations or against certain deck types. *Counterspell* is the best in many cases. *Power Sink* has the disadvantage of needing more mana, but the big advantage that, if you successfully counter something with a *Power Sink*, your opponent will be left with no land mana and so probably won't be able to cast anything else that turn. *Spell Blast* is excel-

Figure 5.23. These spells remove a card temporarily... but it will be back again later.



As mentioned above, the second color will provide most of the spells for dealing with your opponent's permanents. A few blue spells can help out in this area, though. Those often seen in permission decks include Unsummon

Figure 5.24. What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine too.



and Boomerang (Figure 5.23), used to return cards to your opponent's hand, and Binding Grasp, Steal Artifact, and Ray of Command (Figure 5.24), for controlling your opponent's cards.

If your second color is white, Wrath of God, Disenchant, and Divine Offering cover all the types of destruction you need. Spirit Link is another way to neutralize creatures. Red has no way to deal with enchantments, but red damage spells are excellent for taking out creatures, and can also be used against your opponent if you end up facing a creatureless deck. Shatter, Shatterstorm, and Detonate are all good against artifacts. Nevinyrral's Disk can be a good addition to any color, since you'll be playing few or no permanents yourself.

Finally, you need a way to win. Some permission decks disdain damage entirely and go for a victory by running the opponent out of cards, often with the help of Millstones (Figure 5.25). Others include a few damage sources, usually a medium or large creature. This type overlaps with the "large creature deck" discussed earlier in the chapter.

Playing Strategy

Playing any reactive deck takes a different mindset than playing an active deck. Most of the time, you'll be sitting back waiting for your opponent to

do something. If your opponent has a fast deck, you'll probably take quite a beating in the first few turns of the game, before you get enough mana to use your spells effectively. Comebacks from being 10 or 15 life behind are common.

Each time your opponent tries to cast a spell, you need to decide how much of a threat it is. If it doesn't threaten you, let it go. For example, don't waste your counters on spells which give your opponent life, or on his defenses. If your opponent's spell would create a permanent, and you have a spell in your hand which can destroy that permanent, it's usually best to save the counterspell. For example, if your opponent is casting an artifact and you have Disenchant or Shatter in your hand, you generally shouldn't counter it. And as Chapter 4 discussed, once a card is in play, if you have an instant which can destroy it, it often pays to hold off until the card becomes an actual threat.

The exception would be cards which can do something unpleasant enough that you don't even want to let them come into play. For example, if you're playing a Millstone-based deck and you're close to running your opponent out of cards, letting him cast a Feldon's Cane (Figure 5.26) would be disastrous — if it gets into play, your Disenchant can't stop him from activating it.

If you have Binding Grasp or Steal Artifact in your hand, and your opponent casts a spell of the appropriate type, think about whether it's one you'd like to take control of. If so, don't counter it!

A critical skill for the permission mage is the ability to figure out what type of deck and strategy your opponent is playing as quickly as possible. You should familiarize yourself with as many different types of decks as possible, and practice playing them, so you'll know what the key spells and critical cards are. That way, when you find yourself playing against a deck of that sort, you'll know what's most important to counter and what you should let go.

A permission mage should also be good at bluffing. Make it a practice to keep two Islands untapped as much as possible, even if you don't actually have a Counterspell in your hand. And try to keep a card or two in your hand, even if they're just lands, so your opponent will never know whether you actually have a counter available or not.



Figure 5.25. Who needs damage? Some permission decks win via Millstones.



Figure 5.26. It's bad news for a Millstone-based deck if your opponent gets this into play.

Sample Deck: Just Say No

- 4 Air Elemental
- 4 Binding Grasp
- 2 Caribou Range
- 4 Counterspell
- 3 Disenchant
- 1 Divine Offering
- 2 Nevinyrral's Disk
- 4 Power Sink
- 4 Spell Blast
- 4 Spirit Link
- 4 Wrath of God
- 4 Svyelunite Temple
- 4 Adarkar Wastes
- 8 Plains
- 8 Islands

THE LAND DESTRUCTION/DISCARD DECK

The final deck we'll analyze combines two themes — land destruction and discard. These two themes complement each other. The best defense against a discard strategy is to cast your spells before your opponent can make you discard them, but if your opponent is destroying quite a few of your lands, you won't be able to cast much.

Building the Deck

To begin the deck, you need a good collection of spells and effects to mess with your opponent's land. Table 5.5 lists all the cards in *Fifth Edition* which destroy, control, or disable a target land, and Figures 5.27 and 5.28 show them. As you can see, there aren't many, and they come in only two colors: red and black. (Green's Desert Twister can destroy a land, or anything else for that matter, but it doesn't really count.)


 In some of the out-of-print card sets, land destruction was also one of green's abilities. *Ice Storm* and *Thermokarst* (see Figure 5.29) are green spells with the same casting cost as *Stone Rain*.



Figure 5.29. Green used to have land destruction as one of its strengths, but these spells are now out of print.

Blight	Mole Worms	Stone Rain
Conquer	Orcish Squatters	

Table 5.5. Spells which destroy or control a target land.



Figure 5.27. These cards destroy or disable a target land.

You'll also need spells and effects to make your opponent discard. Table 5.6 lists the discard effects in *Fifth Edition*. Most of these are black.

Abyssal Specter	Mind Bomb	(Pox)
Cloak of Confusion	Mind Ravel	Rag Man
Disrupting Scepter	Mind Warp	Zur's Weirding
Forget	Mindstab Thrull	

Table 5.6. Discard effects.



Figure 5.28. These ones take control of your opponent's land.



Figure 5.30. Two artifacts which work especially well in a land destruction deck.

The color scheme for this deck, then, will need to be either pure black or black and red.

Between the land destruction and discard effects, you should be able to fairly thoroughly disrupt your opponent's strategy. The rest of the deck should be mostly devoted to destroying whatever your opponent manages to put into play and damaging your opponent. Small to medium-sized creatures and direct damage spells are both good choices. If you've built a weenie deck or a burn deck, as discussed earlier in this chapter, you'll know what works well in the small-creature and direct damage areas.

Two artifacts, Ankh of Mishra and Dingus Egg (Figure 5.30), also work particularly well in combination with land destruction. Every time you destroy one of your opponent's lands with a Dingus Egg in play, you'll also deal 2 damage, and if there's an Ankh in play as well, then he'll take 2 more damage if he plays another land to replace the one you destroyed. Dark Ritual is a nice addition to any deck using much black; it can give you a big boost at the beginning of the game, allowing you to sum-

Sample Deck:
No Hand No Land

- 4 *Abyssal Specter*
- 4 *Blight*
- 2 *Conquer*
- 2 *Disrupting Scepter*
- 3 *Fireball*
- 3 *Incinerate*
- 4 *Knight of Stromgald*
- 3 *Mind Warp*
- 3 *Mindstab Thrull*
- 2 *Mole Worms*
- 2 *Orcish Squatters*
- 4 *Stone Rain*
- 4 *Sulfurous Springs*
- 8 *Mountain*
- 12 *Swamp*

mon an Abyssal Specter or cast Dingus Egg on the second turn.

Playing Strategy

This is a "proactive" deck. You'll be taking the initiative and doing unto your opponent before he can do unto you, and hopefully preventing him from doing much. Pound on his lands as much as you can. You won't be able to destroy all of them—he almost certainly has more land in his deck than you have landkill effects in yours—but you can put a big crimp in his development. If he's playing more than one color, try to completely deprive him of one of his colors.

At the same time, take any chance you can to nibble away at his hand and to deal damage. Attack when you can, especially if you get out an Abyssal Specter (see figure 5.31). Discarding is more important than damage unless you're close



Figure 5.31. Two-sided threats: these creatures can deal damage and make your opponent discard.

to winning. If you get in an unblocked attack with a Mindstab Thrull and your opponent has more than two cards in his hand (not counting any he'll lose from other discard effects this turn), blow up the Thrull to force the discard.



Much of the fun of **Magic** comes from odd combinations and card interactions. A mental trap that many players fall into is to think of cards as only being usable in one way. Actually, no card has only one use. Every spell can be used for a variety of purposes, depending on what else is going on in the game.

In this chapter, we'll present a potluck collection of tips, tricks, and combinations using *Fifth Edition* cards. If these seem obvious to you, congratulations — you've mastered the art of looking at a card from many directions. If not, then hopefully looking through these will give you some ideas, and help you think of more ways to use your own cards.

TIPS 'N' TRICKS

Animate Dead

You can Animate Dead any creature in the graveyard, even if the creature was never alive. This is great in combination with effects like the Jalum Tome or Krovikan Sorcerer, which allow you to choose and discard a card from your hand. You can discard a big creature, and then Animate it. Animate Dead also works well with Millstone. If your opponent has creatures, use Rag Man to knock the summon spells out of his hand, then Animate the best one.



Ashnod's Transmogrant

The obvious use for Ashnod's Transmogrant is making your own creature bigger. If there's a Meekstone in play, though, you could use the Transmogrant on one of your opponent's tapped two-power creatures to keep it from untapping. You can also use the Transmogrant on an opponent's creature to allow you to use all sorts of anti-artifact effects, such as Shatter, Disenchant, Crumble, Detonate, and so on to get rid of the creature, or even to cast Steal Artifact on it.



Blood Lust

Besides its obvious use of making your own creatures deal more damage, Blood Lust can be a good way to whittle an opponent's creature down to size. Cast Blood Lust on a 5-toughness creature, and a Prodigal Sorcerer or Rod of Ruin can kill it. Blood Lust combines very nicely with Stone Giant, making a creature small enough for the Giant to throw and simultaneously increasing the damage the creature will do.



Crown of the Ages

This card can do all sorts of nifty tricks. Cast Unstable Mutation on an opponent's creature, then use Crown of the Ages to move it to another creature during his upkeep as soon as he places the -1/-1 counter, and he'll have to put another counter on the second creature. Move a Krovikan Fetish and draw another card. Move a Blight after your opponent taps the land, to keep the Blight from being destroyed at the end of the turn.

Dwarven Warriors

The obvious use for Dwarven Warriors is to make your own creatures unblockable. This is especially effective when the creature has a “pump” ability, like a Frozen Shade or Flame Spirit. But did you ever think of using it on your opponent’s creature? If your opponent is attacking with the dreaded Lured Thicket Basilisk, you can use your Dwarven Warriors to make the Basilisk unblockable, effectively cancelling out the Lure.



Elder Druid

This chap has lots of uses. Tap your opponent’s City of Brass or Psychic Venomed land to damage him, or tap his Mana Vault after he pays and untaps it. Tap a blocking creature to keep it from dealing damage. Untap anything that taps to activate, and use it a second time in the same turn. Tap your Howling Mine before each of your opponent’s draw phases and only you will get the extra draw. Tap your Winter Orb at the end of each of your opponent’s turns and only you will get to untap more than one land. Untap a creature that normally requires a steep payment to untap, like the Colossus of Sardia.



Fallen Angel

To get the best use from a Fallen Angel, you need creatures to feed her. Breeding Pit or Caribou Range will give you a steady supply of Angel food, and Sengir Autocrat and Icatian Town each give you four creatures for the price of one card. Put four Nether Shadows in a deck with the Fallen Angel, and you may be able to set up a recycling loop, feeding one or two Shadows to the Angel every turn and then bringing them back during your upkeep. Perhaps the most fun, though, is to use a Seasinger to take control of one of your opponent’s creatures to feed to the Angel.



Fungusaur

Use a Prodigal Sorcerer, Rod of Ruin, or Pestilence at the end of your opponent’s turn to damage your own Fungusaur and make it bigger. If you use Pestilence, do it at the end of your own turn and your opponent’s turn, and grow the Fungusaur twice as fast.





Iron Star

The “lucky charm” artifacts (Crystal Rod, Iron Star, Ivory Cup, Throne of Bone, and Wooden Sphere) can sometimes be used in unexpected ways as a last-ditch save. For example, if your opponent does just enough damage to reduce you to 0 life, you can cast Shatter on your own Iron Star, then use the Star to gain 1 life from the casting of the Shatter before it’s destroyed.



Juxtapose

You can have a lot of fun—and annoy your opponents no end—by using Juxtapose to give them little presents. Cast a Primordial Ooze, use it until it gets too large, then cast Juxtapose to trade it to your opponent. Give an opponent using a creature-based deck an Evil Eye of Orms-By-Gore, and make sure you have a wall to block it with. For an opponent with no creatures, a Lord of the Pit makes a nice gift. For an opponent with no green mana, use a Force of Nature. Gauntlets of Chaos can do the same tricks.



Living Artifact

Cast Living Artifact on one of your opponent’s artifacts instead of one of your own. It works just as well, and he’ll be less likely to destroy the artifact to get rid of it. Cast two Living Artifacts, and if you take only 1 damage per turn you’ll end up gaining life. This works well in combination with something like Pestilence.



Lhurgoyf

If your opponent blocks your Lhurgoyf with something just big enough to kill it, you can use a fast effect to kill another creature, making the Lhurgoyf bigger. In a pinch, you can even kill one of your own creatures. This works especially well if you have something that gives you a benefit for sacrificing a creature, like Skull Catapult or Goblin Digging Team. Also, like Animate Dead, the Lhurgoyf doesn’t care how the creatures got into the graveyard. Use a Millstone on either yourself or your opponent to drop extra cards into the graveyard — every creature you hit will make the Lhurgoyf bigger.

Lure

The oldy-but-goody combination for Lure is to put it on a Thicket Basilisk, allowing you to destroy all your opponent's untapped creatures when you attack. Even better, add a Regeneration and you can repeat the trick. You can use Venom as a "build your own Basilisk kit" to do the same thing with any creature. Perhaps an even better use for Lure, though, is on the Craw Giant. Unless your opponent has several big creatures, you should be able to kill off all your opponent's untapped creatures and deal damage to him at the same time.



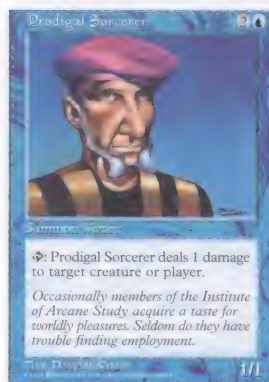
Manabarbs

A Circle of Protection: Red plus Manabarbs makes a truly nasty combination. To avoid damaging yourself, you need to be careful with your timing. Tap one land for mana, then during the damage-prevention for the Manabarbs damage, tap enough land for all the mana you want to use. Then pay one mana to the Circle to prevent all the damage. Meanwhile, your opponent is taking damage for every land he taps.



Prodigal Sorcerer

Do you know how to kill a Samite Healer with a Prodigal Sorcerer? It might seem impossible, since the Samite can just tap to prevent the damage to itself. The trick is to use the Prodigal at the end of your opponent's turn, and then again on your own turn. The second time, the Samite will be tapped and unable to protect itself.



Radjan Spirit

The obvious use for Radjan Spirit's ability is to bring your opponent's flying creatures down to earth, either to allow you to block a flying attacker, or to give your own attacking fliers room to get through. It can also allow you to use Flood or Ice Floe on an opponent's flier. (Once a creature is trapped by Ice Floe, it doesn't matter if it gains flying — it stays trapped.) Sometimes it can be useful to remove flying from one of your own creatures, though. Use the Radjan on your own flier right before casting Hurricane. Or use it in response when your opponent tries to kill one of your fliers with Grapeshot Catapult or Winter Blast.





Reverse Damage

Reverse Damage is a great “save me!” card for when your opponent casts a big Fireball at you, or attacks with a large creature. But perhaps an even better use is in combination with effects that damage both you and your opponent. Put out a Time Bomb and let it build up a lot of counters, for example, then set it off and cast Reverse Damage. Or do the same thing with any mass-damage spell, such as Earthquake or Hurricane. Do this with a Jade Monolith and some creatures in play, and you can redirect all the damage from the creatures to yourself and gain boatloads of life. Game of Chaos or Mana Clash also make fun combinations with Reverse Damage.



Smoke

If you’re playing a burn deck, Smoke makes a nice defense against a creature-heavy opponent. However, it can also be useful when playing with creatures — if you plan for it. Stock your deck with creatures which don’t tap to attack, or use Eternal Warrior to give that ability to a regular creature. Or use it with Errantry, since you’ll usually only want to attack with one creature anyway if you have an Errantry in play. Cast Paralyze on your own creature to evade the Smoke restriction, since Paralyze untaps the creature during the upkeep phase.



Sorceress Queen

Sorceress Queen is another creature with an ability that’s usually used on your opponent’s creatures, but can occasionally be helpful on your own. If one of your one-toughness creatures is about to be hit for 1 damage, use the Sorceress Queen to make it 0/2 and save it. Use her on a Frozen Shade, and it keeps all its pumping and gains 1 toughness. Also, Sorceress Queen combines well with cards that look at the toughness of other creatures, like Aysen Bureaucrats and Orgg. Add a Meekstone to the Queen/Bureaucrats combination, and you can tap an opponent’s large creature and keep it tapped for good.



Spirit Link

The two obvious uses for Spirit Link are gaining life from your own creature’s attacks, or neutralizing an opponent’s creature’s attack. It can do much more than that, though. Cast it on a creature which damages you during upkeep, such as Force of Nature, and cancel the damage. Cast two on it, and gain 8 life every upkeep. Do the same with creatures that damage you when used, like Orcish Artillery. Cast it on your opponent’s regenerating blocker, and gain life whenever the creature blocks.

Sylvan Library

Used by itself, Sylvan Library gives you a choice of three cards the first time you use it, but from then on just gives you a choice between the two rejects from previous turns and one new card. Use it with a Millstone, though, and once you've got to the point where you don't want either of the cards on top of your library, you can use the Millstone to shove them in your graveyard, getting three new cards to look at next turn. The Sylvan Library also combines well with cards that let you reshuffle your library, like Nature's Lore and Untamed Wilds.



Urza's Bauble

The ability of Urza's Bauble seems fairly useless. If you're playing against a permission deck then the ability to find out whether that last card your opponent is holding is really a Counterspell, or just an Island, can be priceless. The main use for Urza's Bauble, though, is simply to make your deck smaller. Since the Bauble is free and you draw another card after using it, you can build a 56 card deck, then add four Baubles to it to make it tournament legal without changing the odds of getting any other card.



Weakness

Weakness is most often used to kill an opponent's 1-toughness creature, or to make an opponent's larger creature less dangerous. If, though, you find yourself playing a deck with 3- or 4-power creatures against an opponent with a Meekstone you can cast Weakness on your own creature to allow it to get past the Meekstone's untapping restrictions.



Zur's Weirding

The big disadvantage of Zur's Weirding is that your opponent can stop you from drawing good cards, too. There are two ways around this. One is to have more life than your opponent. Once he runs too low on life, he'll have to stop denying you cards. Fountain of Youth is one of the best cards for this purpose, since it lets you gain life every turn. Another way is to use effects which let you take cards from your library without drawing them. Two of the best are Necropotence and Elkin Bottle.



Up to this point, this book has concerned itself strictly with standard, by-the-rule-book Magic, with a few side comments about sealed deck and tournament play. From almost the very beginning of the game, though, players have concocted other ways of playing. In this chapter, we'll give a brief overview of some of these variations, including:

-
- Tournaments.
-
- Leagues.
-
- Multiplayer rules.
-
- Sealed deck and draft play.
-

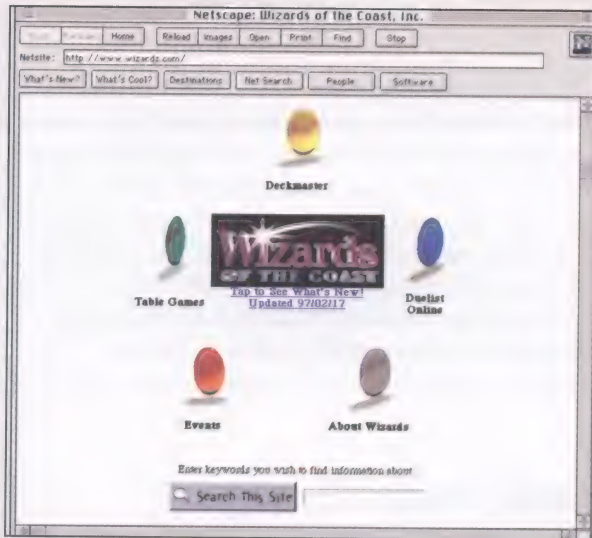


Figure 7.1. The Wizards of the Coast web page has plenty of tournament information, including player rankings.

VARIATIONS

Tournaments

Tournaments have been popular from the very beginning of the game, with the first large Magic tournament held in August 1993. In the early days, there were no standardized tournament rules. Wizards of the Coast soon founded a tournament organization, the Duelists' Convocation (which later enlarged to become the Duelists' Convocation International) to create official tournament rules, sanction tournaments, and track player rankings.

Most tournaments these days use a "Swiss Elimination" format. For the first round of the tournament, everyone is paired up in some arbitrary fashion. Each pair plays a best-two-of-three match, with a win counting for two match points, a draw for one point, and a loss for zero. For each round after that, players with the same scores are paired. After some number of rounds, the Swiss section ends and the players with the top match scores are paired off in a single-elimination playoff tree to determine the winner.

Every match played in a sanctioned tournament gets entered into the DCI rankings database. The system is similar to that used for chess rankings. Every match you win raises your ranking, and every match you lose lowers it. However, the amount of change depends on how far your ranking was from your opponent's. If you beat someone with a much higher ranking, your ranking goes up quite a lot; if you beat someone with a much lower ranking, it only goes up a little.

Eventually, when the DCI player rankings have been going on long enough to make the rankings database more accurate, the pairings for the first round of major tournaments will be seeded by rankings. For now, though, the first pairings are just picked randomly.

Duelists' Convocation members can find out where they stand in the rankings by looking at the Wizards of the Coast web page, <http://www.wizards.com> (Figure 7.1). The rankings lists there are updated every few weeks.

The Pro Tour

The pinnacle of the DCI's tournament system is the Pro Tour (Figure 7.2). These invitational tournaments with large cash prizes are held roughly every two months, and lead up to the Magic World Championship in August. Each Pro Tour tournament uses a different format. Spectators are encouraged, and the finals are shown on large-screen TV with running commentary by expert players. For those who would rather play than watch, a variety of smaller side tournaments go on around the clock.

How can you get invited to a Pro Tour tournament? It's not easy. Every month, qualifier tournaments are held in cities around the world. The winners of these tournaments earn invitations to the next Pro Tour. Players who do well at one Pro Tour also earn invitations to the next. Finally, the players with the best DCI rankings who haven't already earned an invitation get slots.

Leagues

When Magic first started to become popular, many stores and clubs set up local leagues or play ladders, some for prizes, others just for fun and bragging rights. Each league has its own rules. Some leagues run lots of small tournaments, while others simply provide a framework to play pickup matches. Many use sealed deck or draft rules—discussed later in this chapter—with each player getting a set of league cards at the



Figure 7.2. A typical round at a Pro Tour tournament.

beginning of the season.

In 1996, Wizards of the Coast started up a widespread league called Arena. At first, only a few cities were included, but the league is expanding rapidly and will be starting up in some areas outside the United States in 1997. Game stores in eligible cities can sign up to run Arena sections. Players who join Arena get land cards with different artwork than the versions in the regular set (see Figure 7.3), and other unique artwork cards are awarded as prizes.

Arena members can challenge each other to



Figure 7.3. Some of the special cards available only through Arena.

an Arena match any time an Arena judge is available to record the match. Arena rankings are calculated much the same way as DCI rankings. New Arena seasons start every couple of months. At the end of the season, the top-ranked Arena players at each participating store win prizes. And as a special bonus, some areas with lots of Arena play going on are given an extra Pro Tour slot, to be awarded in an Arena-members-only qualifier tournament.

Multiplayer Magic

There are no official rules for multiplayer Magic, but that hasn't stopped lots of players from inventing their own. The Wizards of the Coast have helped out by making sure that the wordings for all recent cards take the possibility of multiple players into account. For example, instead of just saying "opponent," a card will say either "target opponent" or "all opponents." That way it's clear whether it should apply to just one player or not when you have more than one opponent.

When you start a multiplayer game, make sure you all agree on exactly what rules you're using. Since there are no standardized rules, players in different areas often have slightly different variations, each of which seems completely obvious and standard to those who are used to playing that way. You can avoid a lot of arguments by taking a few minutes to spell out the rules before starting.

Multiplayer Magic can be divided into two types — each man for himself, and team. In the individual versions, only one player can win. Players may form temporary alliances, but you have to watch out for your allies: backstabs and treachery are quite normal. In the team versions, players form teams before the game begins, and the team wins or loses as a whole. In some, each team member has their own individual life total, and the team doesn't lose until all members have been separately eliminated; in others, all members of a team share a common life pool.

Free-For-Alls

The simplest form of multiplayer Magic is the free-for-all. This simply takes the normal two-

player **Magic** game and adds in more players. Everyone takes turns, usually going clockwise. Everyone can use fast effects during any player's turn. As usual, you can only make one attack per turn, but you can attack anyone. Some versions allow you to split your attack, assigning each attacking creature to a different player if you wish; others require you to choose just one player per turn to attack. Also, some versions allow only the player who's being attacked to block, while others allow anyone to block.

In most versions, all the creatures heal at the end of every turn, but a few (especially those which allow anyone to block) may vary this by only healing your creatures at the end of your turn and right before the beginning of your next turn.

Usually a player is eliminated as soon as he has lost, and the game continues until only one player remains. Most groups rule that when a player is eliminated, all cards he owns are removed from the game, and all cards belonging to other players which he controlled are buried in their owners' graveyards. This allows the player to take his deck and get into another game. It also adds an interesting strategy twist — if you've taken control of someone's good creature, you may try to keep that player from being eliminated. A few groups, though, keep cards owned by an eliminated player—but controlled by other players—in the game.

If there's no other game to join, eliminated players may end up sitting around bored for quite a while. Two variations prevent this problem. In one, the game ends as soon as one player is eliminated, with whichever player dealt the last damage to him (or controlled the effect which removed the last card from his library) declared the winner. This can lead to some truly bizarre moves as players attempt to keep opponents alive, or to steal the win by damaging someone who's already below 0. In another, no one is eliminated. Players with negative life or empty libraries just keep playing, and the game continues until all the players but one are in losing states simultaneously.

Grand Melee

When you get more than four or five players in a group, free-for-alls start to get messy and the waiting time between turns gets quite long. Richard Garfield, the inventor of **Magic**, developed a set of rules which he called "Grand Melee" that allows any number of players in a single huge game without these problems. Some gaming conventions have run Grand Melees with over 100 players.

For a Grand Melee, everyone sits in a "circle." The actual shape can vary of course — Figure 7.4 shows the arrangement used at the Origins convention in 1996. All spells and effects have a range — usually two players to each side of you, but some groups use a range of one to make keeping track of things easier. Anything that affects "all players" or "all opponents" affects only those within range of its controller. You can only attack the player on your immediate left, but you can cast spells and use effects on anyone within range.

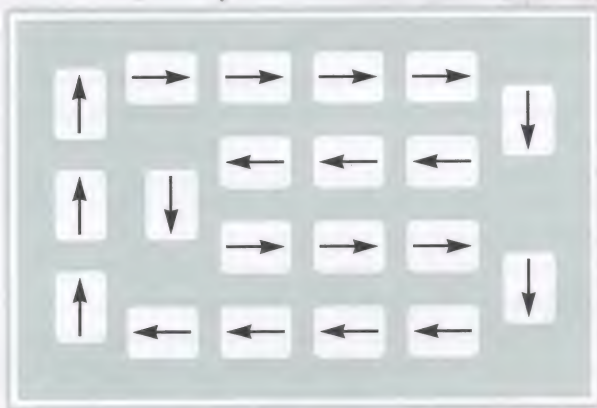


Figure 7.4. The "circle" for a Grand Melee can be warped as much as needed to fit the space.

The player to your left is your "prey" and the player to your right is your "predator." Every time your prey is eliminated, you get a victory point and the next player who's still in the game to the left of you becomes your new prey. It doesn't matter who was actually responsible for the elimination. The last surviving player gets an additional victory point or two as a bonus. At the start of the Grand Melee, turn markers are

spaced every three to five players around the circle. When you get a turn marker, you look down the table to the next turn marker. As soon as there are two players without markers to your left, you flip the marker over (or raise the flag if you have fancy markers), and start your turn. When you finish your turn, you flip it back over (or lower the flag), and pass the marker to the next player to your left. These rules allow lots of players to take turns simultaneously, while ensuring that it's never your turn and one of your in-range opponents' turns at the same time. When a player is eliminated, their spot still counts for determining range until a turn marker passes that spot.

As players are eliminated, the turn markers will eventually jam up. To allow them to move again, turn markers must be removed; this will cause some players to miss a turn. Various methods have been used to decide which marker to eliminate. These include removing the marker from in front of whoever made the most recent kill, pre-numbering the markers (either randomly or in a pattern) and always removing the lowest marker, and picking a random marker whenever the judge notices a jam.

Team Magic

The simplest team variations use free-for-all rules. Pick teams before starting, and arrange the seating to either put all team members next to each other, or alternate between teams, whichever you prefer. Play continues until only one team has anyone left.

Another team variation is called "Two-headed Giant." Pairs of players compete in four-player duels, but each pair is a two-headed giant, sharing a single 40-life pool. Damage to either member of the team is subtracted from the pool; when it reaches 0 that team loses.

Another popular variation is known as "Generals" or "Emperor Magic." Generals is usually teams of three, while Emperor is teams of five. The team sits all in a row, with the General or Emperor in the middle, facing the opposing team. Creatures can only attack a neighbor, so the General or Emperor can't be attacked until the player(s) on one side of him are eliminated. Some versions also limit all spells

and effects to a range of 1. Some apply this range restriction only to the flanks, allowing the General/Emperor to target anyone. The game ends when one General or Emperor is eliminated.

In team variants which use limited attack ranges, some groups allow you to “move” your creatures into a neighboring team member’s territory instead of attacking. These creatures will then be able to attack that player’s neighbor or block creatures attacking that player. Other variants: Some groups allow you to spend mana from your team member’s mana pools. Some have rules about what sort of communication is allowed between players.

Mixed Formats

A couple of final multiplayer variants are sort of a cross between individual and team. The first, for three players, is called “Siamese.” During each player’s turn, the other two players become “Siamese twins.” Whenever either of them loses life, the other loses the same amount of life. Both twins can use damage-prevention effects on each other.

Another mixed format is a five-player variation called “star” Magic. For this variation, each of the five players uses a one-color deck. Sit in the order of the colored dots on the back of a Magic card. Your two neighboring colors are your allies, and the other two are your enemies. A player wins if both his enemies are eliminated. Since your enemies are the allies of your allies, the interactions can get quite bizarre.

Sealed Deck And Draft

The standard rules for Magic allow you to construct your deck using any cards you own. As enthusiasm for collecting Magic cards grew, however, many players began to own boxes or suitcases full of cards. Much of the spontaneity of the early days was lost when everyone had full knowledge of all the cards and had no trouble getting any cards they wanted to use. One response to this was the development of sealed deck and draft rules. These work for both one-on-one challenges as well as in organized tournaments and leagues.

Sealed Deck

In the most primitive form of sealed deck game, each player starts with a factory-sealed starter deck, looks through it, then shuffles it and starts playing. This version is more luck than skill. A simple addition brings more skill into the mix — instead of using the full deck, players can remove cards they don’t want, weeding the deck down to as low as 40 cards. This recreates many players’ first experiences with Magic (minus the confusion of trying to figure out the rules and the surprise of encountering cards with unknown abilities).

Even going down to 40 cards from 60 still leaves too much luck in the game for many players’ tastes. By starting with more cards, you can get more flexibility in the type of decks you can build, and decrease the luck factor. This also increases the cost, though, and having too large a supply of cards makes deckbuilding too easy. Most sealed deck games these days start each player with packs totaling 75 to 190 cards. The number of lands in a starter deck can also be very constricting. If you begin with two starter decks apiece, land isn’t a problem. If you have only one, you’ll generally be allowed to add four or five basic lands of your choice—or be given one extra land of each type—to widen your options a bit. If you’re playing with just boosters and no starter decks at all, you’re usually allowed to add as much basic land as you want.



The most common format for sealed deck tournaments gives each player one starter deck, two fifteen card boosters from either the same set or an expansion, and five extra lands of their choice. Players are usually only given 30 minutes to an hour to build their decks, so you need to be able to evaluate your cards and make decisions quickly.

Draft

All versions of sealed deck still involve a fair amount of luck in which cards you happen to have. Draft rules reduce this luck still further by having everyone choose cards from the same pool.

Basic Draft

For the most basic form of draft, simply open all the packs, spread them out, and take turns picking one card. Then use the cards you selected to build a deck of at least 40 cards. You can either leave the basic lands in as part of the draft—to be picked like any other cards—or separate them out and let everyone use as much basic land as they wish.

Booster Draft

Another popular draft variant, which works well for groups of up to eight or ten players, is called “Booster Draft.” Each player starts with a set number of unopened boosters. Sit in a circle around a table. Everyone opens one of the same size of booster at the same time, picks one card to keep from it, and then passes the rest to the left. As each booster is passed to you, you pick one more card to keep and pass the rest along. Once the booster is empty, repeat the process with the next booster, reversing direction each time. Three 15-card boosters gives a good card assortment. When the draft is finished, everyone uses the cards they drafted plus as much basic land as they want to build 40-card-minimum decks.

Auction Draft

An Auction Draft is just what the name implies — an auction. Each player receives the same amount of play money, which they can spend bidding on cards. You can either spread all the cards out and then let players take turns picking which one comes up for bid next, or you can shuffle them and reveal them one by one, so no one knows what might be coming up later.

Point Draft

The fanciest draft format we’ve seen is the Point Draft. Here, each player starts with a number of points equal to the total number of cards they’ll be drafting. For example, if you have one 60 card starter deck per player, each player gets 60 points. You can track these with marks on paper, fake money from a board game, glass beads, or whatever is handy. All the cards are shuffled

together, and the players sit in a circle. In the center, lay out as many “slots” as the number of players, marked by price: the lowest slot costs zero points, then one point, two points, etc. Choose one player to start. That player draws the top card from the shuffled decks and puts it in the most expensive slot. He can then choose to either buy the card for that many points, or pass. If he passes, the card moves down one slot. Continuing around the circle, each player draws another card and puts it in the most expensive slot. He can then buy one card from any slot or pass. Then he moves all the cards down one slot and the turn passes to the next player. Once a card has reached the zero slot, passing is no longer allowed — the player must either take the zero-point card or pay for one of the more expensive ones. Only the cards above the one that was purchased move down once you reach this point. As with the other draft variations, once all the cards have been drafted, each player takes the cards they drafted and builds a 40 card-minimum deck. If the draft used starter decks, you only get the lands that you drafted; if the draft was entirely from boosters, then you can add as much basic land as you want.

Magic players, like many hobbyists, have almost developed a language of their own for use in discussing the cards and the game. These conversations (whether verbal or on the Internet) can be confusing and hard to follow for those who are new to the game. This chapter provides a quick reference to the most commonly used slang terms or nicknames you'll encounter in **Magic** discussions.

Any noun from the name of a card (or, occasionally, other parts of the name) may be used as shorthand for the entire name. For example, Howl from Beyond is called "Howl" and Orcish Squatters can be either "Orcs" or "Squatters". Card names or name-fragments are frequently used as verbs to mean casting the spell or using the card's ability. For example, **Magic** players will say "Pyroblast it" rather than "counter it with a Pyroblast".

5ML Shorthand for "five Moxes and a Black Lotus." These very expensive, out-of-print mana-producing artifacts are considered by many players to be essential for a winning Type I tournament deck.

Alliances The eighth **Magic** expansion, released in June 1996. The symbol is a waving flag.

ALICE Nickname for the tournament format allowing only cards from the *Alliances* and *Ice Age* expansions.

Alpha The first part of the first printing of **Magic**, released in August 1993. These cards have rounder corners than the "Beta" cards which made up the rest of the first edition.

Antiquities The second **Magic** expansion, focusing on artifacts and spells affecting artifacts, released in March 1994. The symbol is an anvil.

GLOSSARY OF MAGIC JARGON

Arabian Nights The first **Magic** expansion, released in December 1993. The symbol is a scimitar.

Beta The second part of the first printing of **Magic**, released in October 1993. See "Alpha."

Blinky Blinking Spirit. Also known as "the most annoying creature in **Magic**." Using the Blinking Spirit's ability to return itself to your hand is "blinking."

Bolt The out-of-print spell Lightning Bolt, which does three damage for one red mana. Also a verb, meaning to cast a lightning bolt at someone or something, like "bolt you." Occasionally used now for the in-print spell Incinerate, which also does three damage but costs one mana more.

Chronicles The first (and so far only) **Magic** “extension,” *Chronicles* reprinted a number of cards from the early expansions in white-bordered editions. Released in August 1995.

luster deck A deck designed around several interlocking combinations, so that whatever cards you draw, you’re likely to have two or more which combine well together.

Combat damage Damage equal to the creatures’ power, dealt during the damage-resolution step of the attack. Unblocked attacking creatures damage the defending player, while blocked creatures and blocking creatures damage each other. Damage done by fast effects is not combat damage, even if it happens during an attack.

Combination Two or more cards which may not be particularly useful by themselves but do something really good when put together.

Combo Combination.

COP, CoP, or Cop Circle of Protection. Also used as a verb: “cop your Bog Wraith” would mean “prevent the damage from your Bog Wraith by using my Circle of Protection.” Pronounced either “cop” or “cee oh pee.”

The Dark The fourth **Magic** expansion, released in August 1994. The symbol is a crescent moon.

DC, DCI Duelists’ Convocation International, the official **Magic: The Gathering** tournament organization.

Depletion Land River Delta, Land Cap, Lava Tubes, Timberline Ridge, or Veldt. So called because when you tap them for mana, you put a depletion counter on them. These lands were never as popular as the “painlands” and are now out of print.

Direct Damage A spell or effect which deals damage directly to a target.

Dual Land Badlands, Bayou, Plateau, Savannah, Scrubland, Taiga, Tropical Island, Tundra, Underground Sea, or Volcanic Island. These out-of-print cards each count as two different land types, and can tap for two different colors of mana.

Dude Ranch Kjeldoran Outpost, a land from the *Alliances* expansion set which can produce 1/1 soldier tokens (“dudes”).

Fallen Empires The fifth **Magic** expansion, released in November 1994. This expansion was overprinted, so cards from it tend to be much cheaper than any of the other expansions. The symbol is a crown.

Fetch Land Bad River, Grasslands, Flood Plain, Mountain Valley, or Rocky Tar Pit. So called because you sacrifice them to search through your library and pull out the type of land you want.

Fun deck A deck that isn’t strong enough to be tournament-quality, but is still fun to play.

Gang-block Using several blockers to block one attacking creature.

Hack To change a land word on a card using the spell *Magical Hack*, or *Mind Bend*.

‘Haups Jokulhaups.

Homelands The seventh **Magic** expansion. The symbol is a globe.

Ice Age The sixth **Magic** expansion, and the first “standalone expansion.” *Ice Age* was printed for one year, from summer of 1995 through 1996. The symbol is a snowflake.

Inflatable See “pumpable.”

Instantment Nickname for enchantments which give you the option to play them as instants. The *Mirage* and *Visions* expansions both contained spells of this sort.

Kitchen Sink deck A deck built by just throwing in any card that looks fun or useful. These decks can contain everything but the kitchen sink.

Larry Niven’s Disk Nevinyrral’s Disk.


Lawnmower Elves Llanowar Elves.



Legends The third **Magic** expansion, and the biggest of the non-standalone expansions. The symbol is a broken-off tower.

Lock A situation in a duel where one player totally controls the game, leaving the other player unable to successfully cast a spell or make an attack for the rest of the game.

Lock deck A deck designed to set up a "lock" condition.

Lucky Charms Crystal Rod, Iron Star, Ivory Cup, Throne of Bone, and Wooden Sphere. The name probably derives from the colored marshmallow shapes in Lucky Charms cereal.

Mana Birds Birds of Paradise, 0/1 flying creatures which cost  to cast and can tap to produce any color of mana.

Mana Elves Llanowar Elves or Fyndhorn Elves, 1/1 creatures which cost  to cast and can tap to produce . The term is sometimes used more generally to also include Quirion Elves and/or Fyndhorn Elder.

Mana Threshold The minimum amount of mana needed to be able to cast most of the spells in a deck.

Mini See "splash."

Mirage The ninth **Magic** expansion, and the second "standalone expansion." *Mirage* was released in October of 1996, and will be printed for one year. The symbol is a palm tree.

Mox An out-of-print zero-casting-cost artifact which can tap for one colored mana. There are five types: Mox Ruby, Mox Emerald, Mox Pearl, Mox Sapphire, and Mox Jet. The plural of Mox can be either Moxes or Moxen.

Mox Monkey Gorilla Shaman, a creature from the *Alliances* expansion with the ability to destroy artifacts for a cost of one plus twice the artifact's casting cost. A favorite in tournaments where Moxen are allowed.

Necro Necropotence. Also a verb, for example "I necro for three" means "I pay 3 life to take 3 cards."

Necrodeck A deck designed around the Necropotence enchantment.

Painland Adarkar Wastes, Brushland, Karplusan Forest, Sulfurous Springs, or Underground River. So

called because they deal damage to you if you tap them for colored mana. City of Brass is generally not included in this category.

Permission Any deck or strategy using lots of counter-spells. The name comes from the opponent needing to ask permission to cast anything.

Pitch spell A spell which can be cast either by paying the casting cost as normal, or by removing a card in your hand from the game. The *Alliances* expansion contained five cards of this sort: Bounty of the Hunt, Contagion, Force of Will, Pyrokinesis, and Scars of the Veteran.

Pitlord Lord of the Pit.

Poke To tap a card (usually "Tim," the Prodigal Sorcerer) to damage a target, as in "poke you" or "poke your Mesa Pegasus."

Power Nine Black Lotus, the five Moxes, Ancestral Recall, Time Walk, and Timetwister. These nine out-of-print cards are generally considered the most unbalanced "spoiler" cards. They were among the first cards to be restricted in tournament play. Sometimes called the "big nine."

Pro Tour A series of **Magic** tournaments with large cash prizes sponsored by WotC. To earn an invitation to a Pro Tour tournament, you must win a slot at one of the special qualifying tournaments or be ranked near the top of the Duelists' Convocation ranking lists.

Proxy A substitute card, usually created by writing the name of a card across an extra land. Proxies are sometimes used in place of a card that you don't own or don't want to shuffle, or a card that has become marked. Proxies are illegal in most tournaments, but a tournament judge may create a proxy to replace a card that was damaged part way through a tournament.

Pump (1) to increase a creature's power or toughness. (2) to pay mana to activate a card's ability. Most often this will be an ability that increases a creature's power or toughness, but the term is also used for cards such as Pestilence.

Pump-knights Knight of Stromgald, Order of Leitbur, Order of the Ebon Hand, and Order of the White Shield. Only two of these cards are "Summon Knights"

but they all have identical abilities.

Pumpable Having a built-in ability to increase its power and/or toughness.

Null attack Attacking with zero creatures.

OOP Out of print.

Reset button A card which wipes out one or more whole categories of permanents. The reset buttons in *Fifth Edition* are Armageddon, Jokulhaups, Nevinyrral's Disk, and Wrath of God.

Revised The third edition of **Magic**, released in April 1994.

Saboteur A creature with a special ability usable only when it attacks and isn't blocked.

Sac (Pronounced "sack.") Sacrifice.

Sac land Dwarven Ruins, Ebon Stronghold, Havenwood Battleground, Ruins of Trokair, or Svyelunite Temple. So called because you can sacrifice them for an extra point of mana.

Sideboard An extension of your deck. Most constructed-deck tournaments allow each player to have a 15-card sideboard. In between each of your duels you can swap cards between your deck and sideboard, tuning your deck to work better against whatever type of deck you're facing.

Speed bump A small creature used to block a large attacker, holding it off for one turn.

Splash A few spells of a different color added to a deck to provide some function not available in the deck's main color(s). Sometimes called a "mini."

Spoiler A card vastly overpowered in relation to its casting cost.

Serra Not to be confused with the in-print cards Serra Bestiary or Serra Paladin, "Serra" all by itself means the out-of-print card Serra Angel.

Song deck A deck designed around the enchantment Titania's Song.

Sleeves Clear plastic envelopes sized to fit a **Magic** card. Many players put sleeves on their cards to keep them from getting scuffed or damaged by shuffling, sweaty hands, spilled food, and other hazards of play.

Storage land Bottomless Vault, Dwarven Hold, Hollow Trees, Icatian Store, or Sand Silos. So called because you can build up storage counters on them and then tap them for large amounts of mana.

Tap-and-hold A permanent such as Ice Floe which can "pin down" a creature or other permanent, preventing it from untapping normally as long as the tap-and-hold card remains tapped.

Tim Prodigal Sorcerer. Named after the mighty wizard Tim in Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Other cards which can tap for a point of damage are often given Tim-based nicknames, such as "Tim on a stick" for the Rod of Ruin, but these are far less universal. See also "poke."

Type I, Type II, Type 1.5 Tournament rules established by the Duelists' Convocation. Type I and Type 1.5 allow almost any **Magic** card ever printed. Type II allows only the current basic set and the most recent expansions.

Unlimited The second edition of **Magic**, released in December 1993. The name is a bit of a misnomer, since these cards are now out of print and some of them go for very high prices on the secondary market.

Urza-lands Urza's Mine, Urza's Power Plant, and Urza's Tower.

Urzatron The combination of all three Urza-lands.

Visions The tenth **Magic** expansion, released in early 1997.

Weenie A creature costing only one or two mana.

Weenie deck A deck consisting mostly of land and "weenie" creatures, designed to quickly swarm the opponent.

X-spell A direct-damage spell with an X in its casting cost, such as Fireball or Disintegrate. Sometimes used to mean any spell with an X in its casting cost, but more often it means just the damage spells.

FIFTH EDITION CARD LIST

KEY

A = Artifact Com = Common
 B = Black Un = UnCommon
 G = Green
 L = Land
 R = Red
 U = Blue
 W = White

Card Title	Color Type	Cost	Rarity
Abbey Gargoyles	W Summon Gargoyles	2***	Un
Abyssal Specter	B Summon Specter	2☛☛	Un
Adarkar Wastes	L Land		Rare
Æther Storm	U Enchantment	3♠	Un
Air Elemental	U Summon Elemental	3♠♠	Un
Akron Legionnaire	W Summon Legionnaire	6***	Rare
Alabaster Potion	W Instant	x***	Com
Aladdin's Ring	A Artifact	8	Rare
Ambush Party	R Summon Ambush Party	4☛	Com
Amulet of Kroog	A Artifact	2	Com
An-Havva	G Summon Constable	1☛☛	Rare
Angry Mob	W Summon Mob	2***	Un
Animate Dead	B Enchantment	1☛	Un
Animate Wall	W Enchant Creature	*	Rare
Ankh of Mishra	A Artifact	2	Rare
Anti-Magic Aura	U Enchant Creature	2♠	Un
Arenson's Aura	W Enchantment	2**	Un
Armageddon	W Sorcery	3**	Rare
Armor of Faith	W Enchant Creature	*	Com
Ashes to Ashes	B Sorcery	1☛☛	Un
Ashnod's Altar	A Artifact	3	Un
Ashnod's Transmogrant	A Artifact	1	Com
Aspect of Wolf	G Enchant Creature	1♠	Rare
Atog	R Summon Atog	1☛	Un
Aurochs	G Summon Aurochs	3☛	Com
Aysen Bureaucrats	W Summon Bureaucrats	1**	Com
Azure Drake	U Summon Drake	3♠	Un
Bad Moon	B Enchantment	1☛	Rare
Ball Lightning	R Summon Ball Lightning	☛☛☛	Rare
Barbed Sextant	A Artifact	1	Com
Barl's Cage	A Artifact	4	Rare
Battering Ram	A Artifact Creature	2	Com
Benalish Hero	W Summon Hero	*	Com
Binding Grasp	U Enchant Creature	3♠	Un
Bird Maiden	R Summon Bird Maiden	2☛	Com
Birds of Paradise	G Summon Mana Birds		Rare
Black Knight	B Summon Knight	☛☛	Un

Blessed Wine	W Instant	1*	Com
Blight	B Enchant Land	☛☛	Un
Blinking Spirit	W Summon Blinking Spirit	3*	Rare
Blood Lust	R Instant	1☛	Com
Bog Imp	B Summon Imp	1☛	Com
Bog Rats	B Summon Rats	☛	Com
Bog Wraith	B Summon Wraith	3☛	Un
Boomerang	U Instant	♠♠	Com
Bottle of Suleiman	A Artifact	4	Rare
Bottomless Vault	L Land		Rare
Brainstorm	U Instant	♠	Com
Brainwash	W Enchant Creature	*	Com
Brassclaw Orcs	R Summon Orcs	2☛	Com
Breeding Pit	B Enchantment	3☛	Un
Broken Visage	B Instant	4☛	Rare
Brothers of Fire	R Summon Brothers	1☛☛	Com
Brushland	L Land		Rare
Brute, The	R Enchant Creature	1☛	Com
Carapace	G Enchant Creature	♠	Com
Caribou Range	W Enchant Land	2***	Rare
Carrion Ants	B Summon Ants	2☛☛	Un
Castle	W Enchantment	3**	Un
Cat Warriors	G Summon Cat Warriors	1☛☛	Com
Cave People	R Summon Cave People	1☛☛	Un
Chub Toad	G Summon Toad	2☛	Com
CoP: Artifacts	W Enchantment	1**	Un
CoP: Black	W Enchantment	1**	Com
CoP: Blue	W Enchantment	1**	Com
CoP: Green	W Enchantment	1**	Com
CoP: Red	W Enchantment	1**	Com
CoP: White	W Enchantment	1**	Com
City of Brass	L Land		Rare
Clay Statue	A Artifact Creature	4	Com
Cloak of Confusion	B Enchant Creature	1☛	Com
Clockwork Beast	A Artifact Creature	6	Rare
Clockwork Steed	A Artifact Creature	4	Un
Cockatrice	G Summon Cockatrice	3☛☛	Rare
Colossus of Sardia	A Artifact Creature	9	Rare
Conquer	R Enchant Land	3☛☛	Un
Coral Helm	A Artifact	3	Rare
Counterspell	U Interrupt	♠♠	Com
Craw Giant	G Summon Giant	3☛☛☛	Com
Craw Wurm	G Summon Wurm	4☛☛	Com
Crimson Manticores	R Summon Manticore	2☛☛	Rare
Crown of the Ages	A Artifact	2	Rare
Crumble	G Instant	♠	Un
Crusade	W Enchantment	**	Rare
Crystal Rod	A Artifact	1	Un
Cursed Land	B Enchant Land	2☛☛	Un
D'Avenant Archer	W Summon Archer	2**	Com
Dance of Many	U Enchantment	♠♠	Rare
Dancing Scimitar	A Artifact Creature	4	Rare
Dandán	U Summon Dandán	♠♠	Com
Dark Maze	U Summon Wall	4♠	Com
Dark Ritual	B Mana Source	☛	Com
Death Speakers	W Summon Speakers	*	Com
Death Ward	W Instant	*	Com
Deathgrip	B Enchantment	☛☛	Un
Deflection	U Interrupt	3♠	Rare
Derelor	B Summon Thrull	3☛	Rare
Desert Twister	G Sorcery	4☛☛	Un
Detonate	R Sorcery	x☛	Un
Diabolic Machine	A Artifact Creature	7	Un
Dingus Egg	A Artifact	4	Rare
Disenchant	W Instant	1**	Com
Disintegrate	R Sorcery	x☛	Com
Disrupting Scepter	A Artifact	3	Rare
Divine Offering	W Instant	1**	Com
Divine Transformation	W Enchant Creature	2**	Un
Dragon Engine	A A Creature	3	Rare
Drain Life	B Sorcery	1☛	Com
Drain Power	U Sorcery	♠♠	Rare
Drudge Skeletons	B Summon Skeletons	1☛	Com
Durkwood Boars	G Summon Boars	4☛	Com
Dust to Dust	W Sorcery	1***	Un
Dwarven Catapult	R Instant	x☛	Un
Dwarven Hold	L Land		Rare
Dwarven Ruins	L Land		Un
Dwarven Soldier	R Summon Dwarf	1☛	Com
Dwarven Warriors	R Summon Dwarves	2☛	Com
Earthquake	R Sorcery	x☛	Rare
Ebon Stronghold	L Land		Un
Elder Druid	G Summon Cleric	3	Rare
Elkin Bottle	A Artifact	3	Rare
Elven Riders	G Summon Riders	3☛☛	Un

Elvish Archers	G Summon Elves	1☛	Rare
Energy Flux	U Enchantment	2♠	Un
Enervate	U Instant	1♠	Com
Erg Raiders	B Summon Raiders	1☛	Com
Errantry	R Enchant Creature	1☛	Com
Eternal Warrior	R Enchant Creature	☛	Com
Evil Eye of Orms-by-Gore	B Summon Evil Eye	4☛	Un
Evil Presence	B Enchant Land	☛	Un
Eye for an Eye	W Instant	**	Rare
Fallen Angel	B Summon Angel	3☛☛	Un
Fear	B Enchant Creature	☛☛	Com
Feedback	U Enchant Enchantment	2♠	Un
Feldon's Cane	A Artifact	1	Un
Fellowar Stone	A Artifact	2	Un
Feroz's Ban	A Artifact	6	Rare
Fire Drake	R Summon Drake	1☛☛	Un
Fireball	R Sorcery	x☛	Com
Firebreathing	R Enchant Creature	☛	Com
Flame Spirit	R Summon Spirit	4☛	Un
Flare	R Instant	2☛	Com
Flashfires	R Sorcery	3☛	Un
Flight	U Enchant Creature	♠	Com
Flood	U Enchantment	♠	Com
Flying Carpet	A Artifact	4	Rare
Fog	G Instant	☛	Com
Force of Nature	G Summon Force	2☛☛☛	Rare
Force Spike	U Interrupt	♠	Com
Forest (4 ver.)	L Land		Land
Forget	U Sorcery	♠♠	Rare
Fountain of Youth	A Artifact	0	Un
Foxfire	G Instant	2☛	Com
Frozen Shade	B Summon Shade	2☛	Com
Funeral March	B Enchant Creature	1☛☛	Com
Fungusaur	G Summon Fungusaur	3☛	Rare
Fyndhorn Elder	G Summon Elf	2☛	Un
Game of Chaos	R Sorcery	☛☛☛	Rare
Gaseous Form	U Enchant Creature	2♠	Com
Gauntlets of Chaos	A Artifact	5	Rare
Chazbán Ogre	G Summon Ogre	☛	Com
Giant Growth	G Instant	♠	Com
Giant Spider	G Summon Spider	3☛	Com
Giant Strength	R Enchant Creature	2☛	Com
Glacial Wall	U Summon Wall	2♠	Un
Glasses of Urza	A Artifact	1	Un
Gloom	B Enchantment	2☛	Un
Goblin Digging Team	R Summon Goblins	☛	Com
Goblin Hero	R Summon Goblin	2☛	Com
Goblin King	R Summon Lord	1☛☛	Rare
Goblin War Drums	R Enchantment	2☛	Com
Goblin Warrens	R Enchantment	2☛	Rare
Grapeshot Catapult	A Artifact Creature	4	Com
Greater Realm of Preservation	W Enchantment	1**	Un
Greater Werewolf	B Summon Lycanthrope	4☛	Un
Grizzly Bears	G Summon Bears	1☛	Com
Havenwood	L Land		Un
Battleground	L Land		Un
Heal	W Instant	*	Com
Healing Salve	W Instant	*	Com
Heatomb	B Enchantment	1☛☛	Rare
Helm of Chaztuck	A Artifact	1	Rare
Hill Giant	R Summon Giant	3☛	Com
Hipparion	W Summon Hipparion	1**	Com
Hive, The	A Artifact	5	Rare
Hollow Trees	L Land		Rare
Holy Strength	W Enchant Creature	*	Com
Homarid Warrior	U Summon Homarid	4♠	Com
Howl from Beyond	B Instant	x☛	Com
Howling Mine	A Artifact	2	Rare
Hungry Mist	G Summon Mist	2☛☛	Com
Hurky's Recall	U Instant	1♠	Rare
Hurlon Minotaur	R Summon Minotaur	1☛☛	Com
Hurricane	G Sorcery	x☛	Un
Hydroblast	U Interrupt	♠	Un
Icatian Phalanx	W Summon Soldiers	4**	Un
Icatian Scout	W Summon Soldier	*	Com
Icatian Store	L Land		Rare
Icatian Town	W Sorcery	5**	Rare
Ice Floe	L Land		Un
Imposing Visage	R Enchant Creature	☛	Com
Incinerate	R Instant	1☛	Com
Inferno	R Instant	5☛☛	Rare
Infinite Hourglass	A Artifact	4	Rare
Initiates of the Ebon Hand	B Summon Clerics	☛	Com

Instill Energy	G	Enchant Creature	1	Un	Orcish Oriflamme	R	Enchantment	3	Un	Stampede	G	Instant	1	Rare	
Iron Star	A	Artifact	1	Un	Orcish Squatters	R	Summon Orcs	4	Rare	Stasis	U	Enchantment	1	Rare	
Ironclaw Curse	R	Enchant Creature	2	Rare	Order of the Sacred Torch	W	Summon Paladin	1	**	Steal Artifact	U	Enchant Artifact	2	Un	
Ironclaw Orcs	R	Summon Orcs	1	Com	Order of the White Shield	W	Summon Knights	**	Un	Stone Giant	R	Summon Giant	2	Un	
Ironroot Treefolk	G	Summon Treefolk	4	Com	Orrg	R	Summon Orrg	3	**	Stone Rain	R	Sorcery	2	Com	
Island (4 ver.)	L	Land		Land	Ornthopter	A	Artifact Creature	0	Un	Stone Spirit	R	Summon Spirit	4	Un	
Island Sanctuary	W	Enchantment	1	Rare	Panic	R	Instant	2	Com	Stream of Life	G	Sorcery	x	Com	
Ivory Cup	A	Artifact	1	Un	Paralyze	B	Enchant Creature	2	Com	Stromgald Cabal	B	Summon Knights	1	Rare	
Ivory Guardians	W	Summon Guardians	4	**	Pearled Unicorn	W	Summon Unicorn	2	*	Sulfurous Springs	L	Land		Rare	
Jade Monolith	A	Artifact	4	Rare	Pentagram of the Ages	A	Artifact	4	Rare	Syvelunite Temple	L	Land		Un	
Jalum Tome	A	Artifact	3	Rare	Personal Incarnation	W	Summon Avatar	3	**	Swamp (4 ver.)	L	Land		Land	
Jandor's Saddlebags	A	Artifact	2	Rare	Pestilence	B	Enchantment	2	**	Sylvan Library	G	Enchantment	1	Rare	
Jayemdae Tome	A	Artifact	4	Rare	Phantasmal Forces	U	Summon Phantasm	3	Un	Tarpan	G	Summon Tarpan	2	Com	
Jester's Cap	A	Artifact	4	Rare	Phantasmal Terrain	U	Enchant Land	6	Com	Tawno's Weaponry	A	Artifact	2	Un	
Johtull Wurm	G	Summon Wurm	5	Un	Phantom Monster	U	Summon Phantasm	3	Un	Terror	B	Instant	1	Com	
Jokulhaups	R	Sorcery	4	**	Pikemen	W	Summon Pikemen	1	*	Thicket Basilisk	G	Summon Basilisk	3	Rare	
Joven's Tools	A	Artifact	6	Un	Pirate Ship	U	Summon Ship	4	Rare	Throne of Bone	A	Artifact	1	Un	
Justice	W	Enchantment	2	**	Plit Scorpion	B	Summon Scorpion	2	Com	Thrull Retainer	B	Enchant Creature	2	Un	
Juxtapose	U	Sorcery	3	Un	Plague Rats	B	Summon Rats	2	Com	Time Bomb	A	Artifact	4	Rare	
Karma	W	Enchantment	2	**	Plains (4 ver.)	L	Land		Land	Time Elemental	U	Summon Elemental	2	Rare	
Karplusan Forest	L	Land		Rare	Portent	U	Sorcery	x	Com	Titania's Song	G	Enchantment	3	Rare	
Keldon Warlord	R	Summon Lord	2	**	Power Sink	U	Interrupt	x	Un	Torture	B	Enchant Creature	2	Com	
Killer Bees	G	Summon Bees	1	**	Pox	B	Sorcery	2	**	Touch of Death	B	Sorcery	2	Com	
Kismet	W	Enchantment	3	*	Pradesh Gypsies	G	Summon Gypsies	2	Com	Tranquility	G	Sorcery	2	Com	
Kjeldoran Dead	B	Summon Dead	2	Com	Primal Clay	A	Artifact Creature	4	Rare	Truce	W	Instant	2	Rare	
Kjeldoran Royal Guard	W	Summon Soldiers	3	**	Primal Order	G	Enchantment	2	**	Tsunami	G	Sorcery	3	Un	
Kjeldoran Skycaptain	W	Summon Soldier	4	*	Primordial Ooze	R	Summon Ooze	2	Un	Tundra Wolves	W	Summon Wolves	*	Com	
Knight of Stromgald	B	Summon Knight	2	**	Prismatic Ward	W	Enchant Creature	1	*	Twiddle	U	Instant	6	Com	
Krovikan Fetish	B	Enchant Creature	2	**	Prodigal Sorcerer	U	Summon Wizard	2	Com	Underground River	L	Land		Rare	
Krovikan Sorcerer	U	Summon Wizard	2	Com	Psychic Venom	U	Enchant Land	1	Com	Unholy Strength	B	Enchant Creature	2	Com	
Labyrinth	U	Summon Minotaur	3	Un	Pyroblast	R	Interrupt	2	Un	Unstable Mutation	U	Enchant Creature	6	Com	
Leshrac's Rite	B	Enchant Creature	2	Un	Pyrotechnics	R	Sorcery	4	**	Unsummon	U	Instant	6	Com	
Leviathan	U	Summon Leviathan	5	Un	Rabid Wombat	G	Summon Wombat	2	**	Untamed Wilds	G	Sorcery	2	Un	
Ley Druid	G	Summon Cleric	2	Com	Radjan Spirit	G	Summon Spirit	3	Un	Updraft	U	Instant	1	Com	
Lhurgoyf	G	Summon Lhurgoyf	2	**	Rag Man	B	Summon Rag Man	2	**	Urza's Avenger	A	Artifact Creature	6	Rare	
Library of Leng	A	Artifact	1	Un	Raise Dead	B	Sorcery	2	Com	Urza's Bauble	A	Artifact	0	Un	
Lifeforce	G	Enchantment	2	**	Ray of Command	U	Instant	3	Com	Urza's Mine	L	Land		Com	
Lifetap	U	Enchantment	6	Un	Recall	U	Sorcery	x	x	Urza's Power Plant	L	Land		Com	
Living Artifact	G	Enchant Artifact	2	Rare	Reef Pirates	U	Summon Ships	1	**	Urza's Tower	L	Land		Com	
Living Lands	G	Enchantment	3	Rare	Regeneration	G	Enchant Creature	1	Com	Vampire Bats	B	Summon Bats	2	Com	
Llanowar Elves	G	Summon Elves	2	Com	Remove Soul	U	Interrupt	1	Com	Venom	G	Enchant Creature	1	**	Com
Lord of Atlantis	U	Summon Lord	6	Un	Repentant Blacksmith	W	Summon Smith	1	*	Verduran Enchantress	G	Summon Enchantress	1	**	Rare
Lord of the Pit	B	Summon Demon	4	**	Reverse Damage	W	Instant	1	**	Vodalian Soldiers	U	Summon Merfolk	1	Com	
Lost Soul	B	Summon Lost Soul	1	**	Righteousness	W	Instant	*	Rare	Wall of Air	U	Summon Wall	1	Un	
Lure	G	Enchant Creature	1	**	Rod of Ruin	A	Artifact	4	Un	Wall of Bone	B	Summon Wall	2	Un	
Magical Hack	U	Interrupt	6	Rare	Ruins of Trokair	L	Land		Un	Wall of Brambles	G	Summon Wall	2	Un	
Magus of the Unseen	U	Summon Wizard	1	Un	Sabretooth Tiger	R	Summon Tiger	2	Com	Wall of Fire	R	Summon Wall	1	**	Un
Mana Clash	R	Sorcery	2	Rare	Sacred Boon	W	Instant	1	*	Wall of Spears	A	Artifact Creature	3	Com	
Mana Flare	R	Enchantment	2	Rare	Samite Healer	W	Summon Cleric	1	*	Wall of Stone	R	Summon Wall	1	**	Un
Mana Vault	A	Artifact	1	Rare	Sand Silos	L	Land		Rare	Wall of Swords	W	Summon Wall	3	Un	
Manabarb	R	Enchantment	3	Rare	Scaled Wurm	G	Summon Wurm	7	Com	Wanderlust	G	Enchant Creature	2	Un	
Marsh Viper	G	Summon Viper	3	Com	Scathe Zombies	B	Summon Zombies	2	Com	War Mammoth	G	Summon Mammoth	3	Com	
Meekstone	A	Artifact	1	Rare	Scavenger Folk	G	Summon Scavenger Folk	2	Com	Warp Artifact	B	Enchant Artifact	2	**	Rare
Memory Lapse	U	Interrupt	1	Com	Scryb Sprites	G	Summon Faeries	2	Com	Weakness	B	Enchant Creature	2	Com	
Merfolk of the Pearl Trident	U	Summon Merfolk	6	Com	Sea Serpent	U	Summon Serpent	5	Com	Whirling Dervish	G	Summon Dervish	2	Un	
Mesa Falcon	W	Summon Falcon	1	*	Sea Spirit	U	Summon Spirit	4	Un	White Knight	W	Summon Knight	**	Un	
Mesa Pegasus	W	Summon Pegasus	1	*	Sea Sprite	U	Summon Faerie	1	Un	Wild Growth	G	Enchant Land	2	Com	
Millstone	A	Artifact	2	Rare	Seasinger	U	Summon Merfolk	1	**	Wind Spirit	U	Summon Spirit	4	Un	
Mind Bomb	U	Sorcery	4	Un	Segovian Leviathan	U	Summon Leviathan	4	Un	Winds of Change	R	Sorcery	2	Rare	
Mind Ravel	B	Sorcery	2	Com	Sengir Autocrat	B	Summon Autocrat	3	Rare	Winter Blast	G	Sorcery	x	Un	
Mind Warp	B	Sorcery	x	3	Seraph	W	Summon Angel	6	Rare	Winter Orb	A	Artifact	2	Rare	
Mindstab Thrull	B	Summon Thrull	1	**	Serpent Generator	A	Artifact	6	Rare	Wolverine Pack	G	Summon Wolverine	2	**	Un
Mole Worms	B	Summon Worms	2	Com	Serra Bestiary	W	Enchant Creature	**	Un	Wooden Sphere	A	Artifact	1	Un	
Mons' Goblin Raiders	R	Summon Goblins	2	Com	Serra Paladin	W	Summon Paladin	2	**	Word of Blasting	R	Instant	1	**	Un
Mountain (4 ver.)	L	Land		Land	Shanodin Dryads	G	Summon Nymphs	2	Com	Wrath of God	W	Sorcery	2	**	Rare
Mountain Goat	R	Summon Goat	2	Com	Shapeshifter	A	Artifact Creature	6	Un	Wretched, The	B	Summon Wretched	3	**	Rare
Murk Dwellers	B	Summon Murk Dwellers	3	Com	Shatter	R	Instant	1	**	Wyluli Wolf	G	Summon Wolf	1	*	Rare
Nature's Lore	G	Sorcery	1	Com	Shatterstorm	R	Sorcery	2	**	Xenic Poltergeist	B	Summon Poltergeist	1	**	Rare
Necrite	B	Summon Thrull	1	**	Shield Bearer	W	Summon Soldier	1	*	Zephyr Falcon	U	Summon Falcon	1	Com	
Necropotence	B	Enchantment	2	**	Shield Wall	W	Instant	1	*	Zombie Master	B	Summon Lord	1	**	Rare
Nether Shadow	B	Summon Shadow	2	Rare	Shiyvan Dragon	R	Summon Dragon	4	**	Zur's Weirding	U	Enchantment	3	Un	
Nevinyrral's Disk	A	Artifact	4	Rare	Shrink	G	Instant	2	Com						
Nightmare	B	Summon Nightmare	5	Rare	Sibilant Spirit	U	Summon Spirit	5	Un						
Obelisk of Undoing	A	Artifact	1	Rare	Skull Catapult	A	Artifact	4	Un						
Orcish Artillery	R	Summon Orcs	1	**	Sleight of Mind	U	Interrupt	6	Rare						
Orcish Captain	R	Summon Orc	2	Un	Smoke	R	Enchantment	2	**						
Orcish Conscripts	R	Summon Orcs	2	Com	Sorceress Queen	B	Summon Sorceress	1	**						
Orcish Farmer	R	Summon Orc	1	**	Soul Barrier	U	Enchantment	2	Com						
					Soul Net	A	Artifact	1	Un						
					Spell Blast	U	Interrupt	x	Com						
					Spirit Link	W	Enchant Creature	*	Un						

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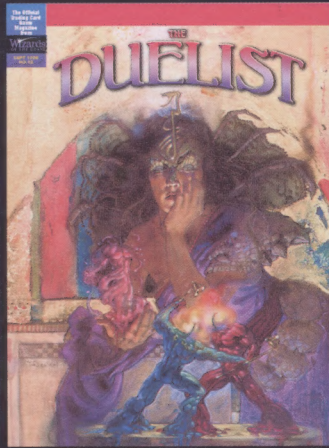
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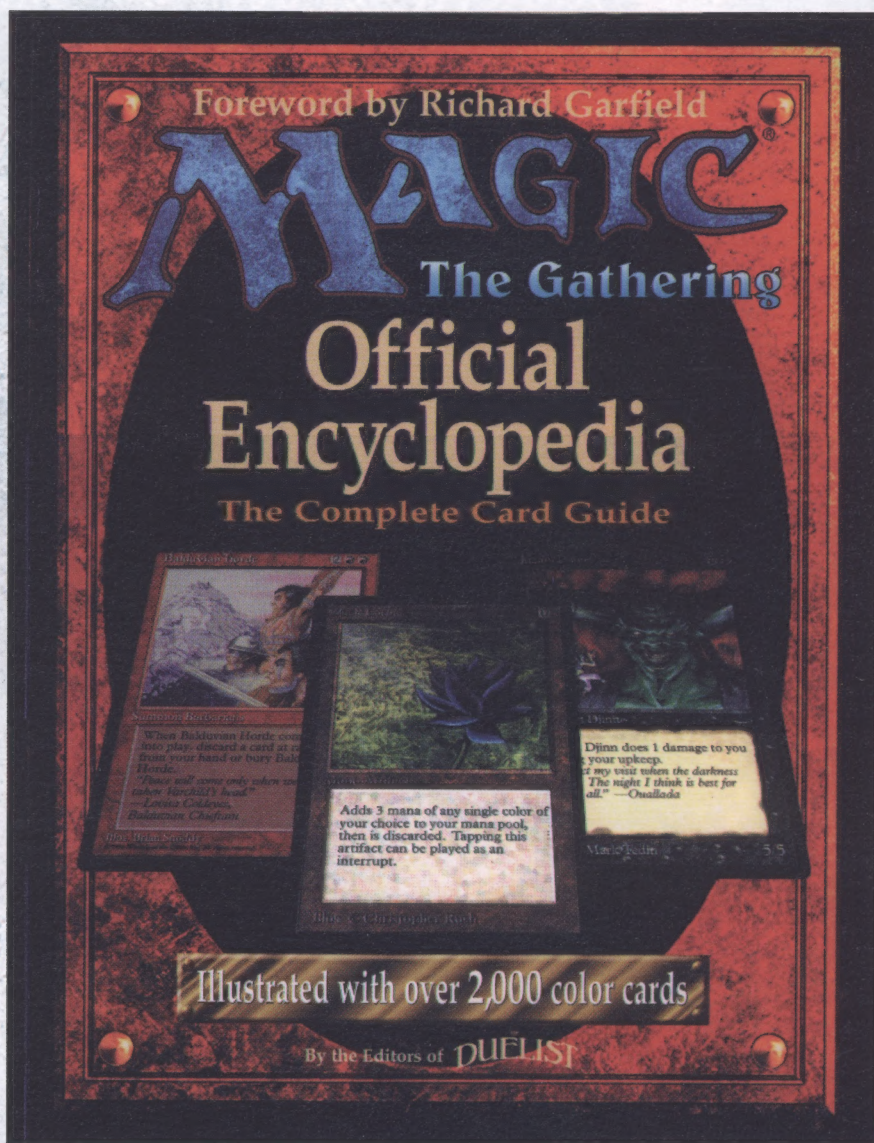
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